

Alchemical Endgame —
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Figure 66. *Döden Spelar Schack* (Death Playing Chess)
with the faded inscription: *Jak Spelar tik Matt*
(I Checkmate Thee). Albertus Pictor,
1490.

CHAPTER 18

Alchemical Endgame

'Checkmate' in Beckett and Eliot

DAN MELLAMPHY

CHESS GAMES, WHICH APPEAR EXPLICITLY AND IMPLICITLY, formally as well as functionally, throughout the works of Thomas Stearns Eliot and Samuel Barclay Beckett, are from their outset to their endgame concerned with death: with what is called the *checkmate*, from the Persian *shah mat*, the death (*mat*) of the king (*shah*). The entire game is one of elimination or annihilation, the ultimate elimination or annihilation being that of the *shah mat*: the king that is at the heart of every chess game—the latter being the veritable focus of the game from start to finish, from the beginning to the end. The surviving king, in other words, is not at all the focus of the game, but only its remainder. And since the *shah mat* is the focal point, the game should rightfully be seen from its perspective—which of course would be the perspective of an annihilated or assassinated being (in Beckett's words, *un être assassiné*¹ or *être manqué*²): here the martyred monarch.

1. Samuel BECKETT, quoted in Charles JULIET, *Rencontre avec Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1986), 14; my translation.

2. Samuel BECKETT, quoted in Lawrence HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett, Poet and Critic* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 247.

The word martyr, referring to one who suffers persecution and death for the sake of a great[er] vision (in the present case for 'check-mate'), in fact derives from the Greek word for 'witness': *martyros*.³ The vision of the martyr—here the murdered monarch who has played the game in earnest, in good faith—is that fatal vision which the protagonist of Beckett's *Murphy* described as 'such a rare post-natal treat': 'the absence (to abuse a nice distinction) not of *percipere* but of *percipi*'.⁴ In the absence of that which is perceived (*percipi*), indeed of the perceiving subject and all of its objects, what is perceived (*percipere*) is the 'nothing' with respect to which that most famous student of the Pythagorean Empedocles,⁵ Democritus of Abdera,⁶ said 'naught is more real'⁷—*reality* as such, as 'plenitude of the void':⁸ the void as beginning and end, end and beginning, full circle.

The Pythagorean Giovanni Malfatti, whose work was translated into French in 1849 and then republished in 1946 with an introduction by Gilles Deleuze, called this void, this nihil, the 'metaphysico-mathematical zero' which is the source of all subsequent *mathesis*, all conception and calculation.⁹ In the treatise introduced by Deleuze, Malfatti explains that '*Le zero métaphysico-mathématique nous semble être nul, n'être rien, tandis que, dans le cas contraire, il est tout*'.¹⁰ the metaphysico-mathematical zero—this naught, this void—seems devoid of content, whereas on the contrary the void is anything but devoid of content; the void indeed is 'all'. And in the chess game this is certainly the case: the *shah mat* or eliminated king is the whole point, the crux, the 'all', of the game. Everything in the game has to do with the *shah mat*: the latter looms 'over the shoulders of its [players]'¹¹

3. See www.etymolonline.com (martyr).

4. Samuel BECKETT, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1938), 246.

5. Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (trans. Greg Whitlock, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 121.

6. NIETZSCHE, *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 122.

7. BECKETT, *Murphy*, 246.

8. Emmanuel LEVINAS, *Time and the Other* (trans. Richard Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 46.

9. Giovanni Malfatti di Montereccio (Jean Malfatti de Montereccio), *Études sur la Mathèse, ou Anarchie et Hiérarchie de la Science* (trans. Christien Ostrowski, Paris: Éditions du Griffon d'Or, 1946), 8; my translation from the French edition.

10. Malfatti, *Études*, 11.

11. Josephine Jacobsen and William Mueller, *Testament of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 21.

like a body without organs or a body whose organs are the pieces *qua* figures in play. The *shah mat*, the zero, is thus the matrix¹² of the whole even though (by dint of being eliminated) it is a hole, an absence: an *être manqué*,¹³ *assassiné*.¹⁴

This strange notion of being, this 'missing'/'assassinated' being that is nevertheless 'omnipresent'¹⁵ in its absence as the matrix of all moves and manifestations—a 'polyphiloprogenitive [...] superf[o]etation'¹⁶ in the words of T. S. Eliot—was one toward which certain pre-Platonic thinkers seem to have been drawn, and in the present essay the pre-individual protagonist of Beckett's and Eliot's work will be examined in light of the three 'purest paradigms' of pre-Platonic thought according to Nietzsche:¹⁷ Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and the last pre-Platonic philosopher, Socrates. The first two, Pythagoras and Heraclitus, are thinkers toward which Beckett and Eliot often turned in their works and they furthermore turn our attention as readers (Pythagoras is the key philosopher, for instance, of Beckett's first novel *Murphy*, and fragments of Heraclitus form the epigraphs of Eliot's final set of poems, the *Four Quartets*, to name an initial and a culminating work on either end); the last one provides our current 'cybernetic' era with its fundamental principle: the impersonal metaphysico-mathematical conduit or *kybernētēs*, which conducts and thereby conjoins a set of *dramatis personae* or 'cast of characters' in play. In a sense the Socratic *kybernētēs* conjoins Heraclitean and Pythagorean formulations (such as the latter's *hypotonos*, his famous 'hypotenuse', and the former's *palintonos harmoniē*, his tense and unifying 'harmony', also called the *palintropos harmoniē*, a harmony stretched across the given extremes¹⁸ like the taughtly-stretched *tympanum* of Beckett's *Unnamable*¹⁹) that are found to be at work in Eliot's and Beckett's

12. *Murphy*'s 'matrix of surds' (*Murphy*, 112).

13. HARVEY, *Beckett, Poet and Critic*, 247.

14. JULIET, *Rencontre*, 14.

15. Omnipresent as opposed to a thing of the past.

16. 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', *Complete Poems and Plays: 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1952), 33.

17. NIETZSCHE, *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 58.

18. HERACLITUS, Fragment 51; *Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary* (trans. Miroslav Marcovich, Mérida Venezuela: Los Andes University Press, 1967), 126–127.

19. SAMUEL BECKETT, *The Unnamable*, in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 383.

texts, just as in this study the ‘universal cybernetic’²⁰ sketched-out by Gilbert Simondon—Simondon’s revision and rearticulation of the *mathesis universalis* which René Descartes endeavoured to revive from the likes of Pythagoras²¹—in a sense sets up a feedback loop between its two principal philosophers/Beckett-scholars: Simondon’s two contemporaries, the mutually-antagonistic²² mathetical thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou.

Just as Eliot attempted in his work a ‘Dethronement of Descartes,’²³ Descartes was the *shah mat* of Beckett’s first published poem (a poem in which the life and death of Descartes are described).²⁴ The Cartesian *cogito* finds itself unmasked in their respective work, and behind it they uncover the ‘larval subject’²⁵—‘*l’homme larvaire*’²⁶—that in the words of Descartes himself ‘*larvatus prodeō*’ (‘advances masked’-as-Descartes).²⁷ The Beckettian and Eliotic ‘larval subject’ can only be ill-seen and ill-said: being pre-individual and indeed prior to the distinction between object and subject, it tends to escape every effort to identify it or, in the words of J. Alfred Prufrock, to ‘fix [it] in a formulated phrase’ so that, ‘formulated, sprawling on a pin,’ it can thus be ‘pinned [...] wriggling on the wall.’²⁸ Under the rock-

20. Gilbert SIMONDON, *L’Individuation à la Lumière des Notions de Forme et d’Information* (Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon, 2005), 561; my translation.

21. René DESCARTES, ‘Cogitationes privatae’, *Opusculæ de 1619–1621* (transcribed by Gottfried Leibniz), in *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. x (eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris: Éditions J. Vrin, 1974), 375b.

22. It should be pointed out that Deleuze and Badiou were arguably as *opposed* and *antagonistic* one to the other as were Beckett and Eliot before them, not to mention Heraclitus and Pythagoras in Greek antiquity. That said, attention in this essay is accorded to the *similarities* rather than the *differences* between these antagonistic authors, whose respective works converge, antagonistically, upon a similar ‘problematic field’ or ‘contested milieu’ which is the *crux* (the *focus*, the *FOCAL POINT*) of this particular paper.

23. Jewel Spears BROOKER, *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 173.

24. Samuel BECKETT, *Whoroscope* (Paris: The Hours Press, 1930), reprinted in *Collected Poems in English and French* (London: John Calder, 1977), 1–6.

25. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 78, 79, 110, 118, 119, 215, 278.

26. BECKETT, quoted in Chris ACKERLEY and Stan GONTARSKI, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 309, 652.

27. DESCARTES, ‘Cogitationes privatae’, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 213.

28. ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, CPP,

like façade of Prufrock-like *personae* the auto- or onto-speleologist²⁹ grasps only 'a handful of dust';³⁰ but those accustomed to desert[ed] environments³¹ discern, if only dimly (ill-seen and ill-said) *al-kemi* in *al-deshret*—'roots that clutch, [...] branches [that] grow/ Out of this stony rubbish'.³² As Jacobsen and Mueller have attested, this discovery or uncovering is a 'frightening' one³³ in part because it is absurd, unspeakable, beyond the bounds of propriety and of proper personality, of individual identity. Beckett and Eliot uncover or discover in their respective works that which the Greeks called an *alogos*: something unspeakable beneath or beyond that which is spoken. In order to approach this *alogos* these poets, playwrights and prose-writers wind up becoming 'logoclasts':³⁴ their literature becomes a literature of unwording so as to uncover 'the word unheard'³⁵ (the *logos alogos*), 'The word within a word, unable to speak a word,/ Swaddled with darkness'.³⁶

Their *poesis*, their poetic principle, becomes a veritable *mathesis* leading them out of the world of words³⁷ and 'on[to] the road toward this [...] literature of the non-word'.³⁸ The work of these wordsmiths (T. S. Eliot and Samuel Beckett) turns out to be an 'assault against words':³⁹ a 'word-storming'⁴⁰ that is likened by Beckett to the work of a 'mad mathematician'⁴¹ whose every step is different, ir-rational 'and ir-reflexive' in the words of Badiou,⁴² and alters in its peram-

29. James KNOWLSON and John PILLING, *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1980), xiii.

30. *The Waste Land*, §1, 'The Burial of the Dead', CPP, 38.

31. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 168.

32. Op.cit.

33. JACOBSEN & MUELLER, *Testament of Samuel Beckett*, 21.

34. Samuel BECKETT to Mary Manning HOWE, 11-07-37, in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume One: 1929-1940* (eds. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 521 n. 8.

35. 'Ash Wednesday', §IV, CPP, 64.

36. 'Gerontion', CPP, 21.

37. Literally an 'education' in the sense of e-ducere, being lead or conducted out.

38. Samuel Beckett to Axel Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 518, 520.

39. Samuel Beckett to Axel Kaun, 09-07-37 (trans. Martin Esslin), in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* (ed. Ruby Cohn, New York: Grove Press, 1984), 173.

40. Samuel Beckett to Axel Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 520.

41. Samuel Beckett to Axel Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 173.

42. Alain BADIOU, *Being and Event* (trans. Oliver Feltham, London: Continuum

balance the very principle of measurement. The *mathesis* that alters the principle of measurement as it proceeds is according to Simondon a 'transductive' *mathesis*: in their works, Eliot and Beckett are thus conducted toward *transduction* (from Latin *traducere*, 'change over, convert'; 'traduce') an operation 'which bases its propagation on a gradual [re]structuring' of its operative milieu (and hence the conditions or context of its operation) as its process unfolds; 'each restructured region serves as [structural foundation or] constitutive principle for the following region' such that differences—different individuations, different individual realisations or structural manifestations—come about within (with and in) this structuring operation.⁴³ 'All these Murphys, Molloyes and Malones do not fool me,'⁴⁴ states the Unnamable in Beckett's *Unnamable*; they are all of them fragments, fragmentary manifestations/realisations, of an ongoing transduction, and the Unnamable is its transductive being. The same is true of Tiresias in *The Waste Land*: Tiresias too is transductive, a transductive being. 'Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a *character*, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest,' writes Eliot. 'Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phœnician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias.'⁴⁵

Chess is a transductive operation, each move reordering, reconstituting and restructuring prior patterns and prior plans. The entropy at work within this operation, the negation or gradual annihilation of the figures in play, is ectropic with regard to its transductive being or 'the system of [its] dissolved self,'⁴⁶ its *shah mat*. At its entropic peak—the utter extreme of its endgame—the figureless/groundless (figure-into-ground) world of the *shah mat* or 'dissolved self'⁴⁷ is at its most discernible. In the words of *Worstward Ho*,⁴⁸ 'Then all seen as only then':⁴⁹ 'All clear. Black hole agape on all. Inletting all. Out-

Books, 2005), 3.

43. SIMONDON, *Individuation*, 32.

44. BECKETT, *The Unnamable*, 303.

45. ELIOT, *The Waste Land*, CPP, 52 n. 218.

46. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 78.

47. Ibid.

48. The worst words, therefore the best.

49. See *Worstward Ho*, in *Nohow On: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho*

letting all'.⁵⁰ The event of check-mate, as the chess game's focal point, is in this sense a kind of puncture point, pin-hole or aperture from which to witness, if only dimly (ill-seen and ill-said), 'the system of a dissolved self'⁵¹ that is the chess game's very matrix.

The moment of check-mate is, to lift a line from Eliot's letter to Stephen Spender, a moment when 'you have to give yourself up';⁵² 'What happens', writes Eliot in another context, is a 'depersonalisation':⁵³ the check-mated king is, as the king that has been killed, no longer a king properly speaking, but something *other*. The king, having been check-mated, undergoes an 'extinction of personality', no longer being the king properly speaking, but an ex-king. Having 'sacrificed' his 'self' as so-called 'king' (in this 'surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable'—namely the *shah mat* that is from the very beginning the *be-all* and *end-all* of chess), the latter is 'set [...] among the dead',⁵⁴ set among the game's entire cast of characters. In this setting⁵⁵ the latter perceives, if only 'for the poor benefit of a bewildering minute',⁵⁶ what the martyr perceives, 'which is a sense of the timeless' and hence of what is out of time 'as well as of the temporal, and of the timeless and of the temporal together'.⁵⁷ What is gained in this moment of loss is 'a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence'.⁵⁸ This perception, ill-seen and ill-said,⁵⁹ is that of Tiresias 'at the violet hour, the evening hour', in *The Waste Land*.⁶⁰ 'I Tiresias', this voiceless being intones, unheard, at the mid-point of the poem, 'I who have sat by Thebes below the wall/ And walked among the lowest of the dead, [...] Perceived the

(New York: Grove Press, 1996), 112.

50. See *Worstward Ho* in *Nohow On*, 115.

51. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 78.

52. ELIOT, quoted by Frank KERMODE in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (ed. Frank Kermode, London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 13.

53. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in KERMODE, *Selected Prose*, 40.

54. *Ibid.*, 38.

55. This setting which Nietzsche would have called a 'going under' (a kind of sunset [*Untergang*]); see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I.XXII.iii, 'On the Bestowing of Virtue'.

56. *Op. cit.*, 42.

57. *Op. cit.*, 38.

58. *Ibid.*

59. 'That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory', writes ELIOT in *Four Quartets*, §11: ii, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 125.

60. *The Waste Land*, §III, 'The Fire Sermon', *CPP*, 43.

scene, and foretold the rest'⁶¹—to which Eliot then adds the following statement: 'What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem',⁶² but only from the perspective of one who has 'walked among the lowest of the dead', one who is 'not indeed a *character*', and yet unites them all ('uniting all the rest').⁶³

In the moment of his check-mate, at the peak of the play, the assassinated archbishop Thomas à Becket of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* discerns, like Tiresias at the violet hour in the middle of *The Waste Land*, like Murphy defeated by Endon at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat in *Murphy*, like the Unnamable who—though not indeed a 'character' in Beckett's *Unnamable*—unites all the rest of the discordant characters,⁶⁴ [discerns, to repeat] the reality of his condition, which is in sum impersonal and trans-individual.

It is this larval condition that the present paper sets out to study, and specifically this condition exemplified in the works of Beckett and Eliot through the example of the check-mated condition: the resolution/dissolution of that game of annihilation known as chess. The structure and dynamics of this game formerly called *shatrang* or *chaturanga* (respectively the Persian and the Sanskrit words for the four-part or the four-fold)⁶⁵ encase and showcase four fundamental pre-Platonic principles at work in Eliot's and Beckett's respective *œuvres*: (1) the *calx* or counting-stones (*psēphoi* or playing-pieces) of Pythagorean philosophy that have as their Heraclitean equivalents the *pesseia* of Fragment 52; (2) the *mathesis* or *tetractys* (grid or playing-field) of Pythagorean philosophy which has as its Heraclitean equivalent the unheard/unheeded *logos* (Heraclitus' *logos alogos*); (3) the *hypotonos* or *hypotropos* (*élan vital* or vital tension) of Pythagorean philosophy which has as its Heraclitean equivalents the *palintonos/palintropos harmoniē* and the principle of *agchibasis* (*agchibasien*); and (4) Socrates's equivalent of this *hypotonos*, *hypotropos*, *palintonos*,

61. *Ibid.*, 44.

62. *The Waste Land*, CPP, 52 n. 218.

63. *Ibid.*

64. 'All these Murphys, Molloyes and Malones' (*The Unnamable*, 303).

65. 'The trail of chess leads back to about AD 500. Then we strike a barrier behind which historical research has not penetrated. All we know is that during the sixth century, inhabitants [of Northern India and Persia] were playing *chaturanga*, a game substantially like modern chess,' explains Henry DAVIDSON in *A Short History of Chess* (Greenberg: David MacKay, 1949), 22.

palintropos and *agchibasis*: the *kybernētēs*—four principles that in point of fact are really three.

GNOTHI SEAUTON—THE SEARCH FOR THE SELF

In their *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, Stan Gontarski and Chris Ackerley note the surprising yet sustained parallelism between the works of Samuel Beckett and T. S. Eliot. 'Such sustained parallelism is rare in Beckett's writings, but it testifies to Eliot's significance as one who had once inhabited the waste land, even if he later set his lands in order in a way that Beckett could not.'⁶⁶ They note that the two 'have much in common' in their respective works (an interest in 'time and memory', a penchant for 'complex allusion, discontinuous form, musical rhythms and paradigms')⁶⁷ and call our attention to the fact that Beckett explicitly echoed Eliot both in the structure of his first published poem (*Whoroscope*, published in 1930) and in the title of his subsequent collection, *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (published in 1935). 'The notes for *Whoroscope* imitate *The Waste Land*, and *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* echoes *Prufrock and Other Observations*', they write.⁶⁸ There are, of course, many other correlations, including their revival and rearticulation of ancient Greek ideas, most especially those of Pythagoras the Samian and his younger and oft-opposed contemporary, Heraclitus the Ephesian. Beckett's very first novel,⁶⁹ for example ('the matrix of his later works, anticipating many of their concerns', according to Ackerley and Gontarski),⁷⁰ is an explicitly Pythagorean endeavour, and Pythagorean calculations inform a great deal of his work.⁷¹ Even in light of this, Badiou nevertheless suggests that 'Beckett is a disciple of Heraclitus': that he reveals himself, in his works, to be remarkably Heraclitean.⁷² Likewise Eliot's final poem, itself reflecting the structure and dynamics of *The*

66. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 168.

67. *Ibid.*, 167.

68. *Ibid.*

69. SAMUEL BECKETT, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1938).

70. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 387.

71. Indeed the present study endeavours to exemplify this very point.

72. BADIOU, *On Beckett* (ed. and trans. Alberto Toscano and Nina Power, Manchester: Clinamen, 2003), 48.

Waste Land written decades earlier,⁷³ is declaratively Heraclitean (two fragments from Heraclitus form its framing epigraph and inform the entire *Four Quartets*)⁷⁴ even though the concerns of his work as a whole resound more and more, as the work progresses, of Pythagorean pontification.

For all of the parallelism between the works of Eliot and Beckett, Ackerley and Gontarski admit that 'Eliot's establishment values, right-wing pontifications, and sanctimonious religion precluded deep rapport' between the writers themselves.⁷⁵ In antiquity, this was very much the criticism Heraclitus had for Pythagoras: that the latter's values, pontifications, and sanctimonious religion precluded deep rapport with the *logos alogos* (the *word unheard*, the *obscure[d] order*) at the root of all things and of all of the latter's writings. 'Pythagoras, the son of Mnesarchus, pursued inquiry further than all other men,' but 'choosing what he liked from these compositions, he made a wisdom of his own,' wrote Heraclitus.⁷⁶ Because of this imposition of choice (i.e., of 'his own [...] choosing') he ended up being 'the prince of impostors'⁷⁷ rather than a witness to and witness from 'the desert of the real':⁷⁸ the deserted *logos* that was for Heraclitus the *logos alogos*. However, this did not preclude Pythagoras having a profound influence on the thought of Heraclitus, nor did Eliot's values and pontifications preclude his having a profound influence on the

73. Each of the *Four Quartets* is structured like *The Waste Land*, having five parts that function with respect to one another in analogous ways. Hugh Kenner makes the same point in his contribution to Bernard BERGONZI's *Four Quartets: A Case Book* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 'Into our First World'.

74. ELIOT, *Four Quartets*, epigraphs, *CPP*, 117.

75. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 167.

76. HERACLITUS, Fragment 129 (trans. Charles KAHN, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 39, §xxv).

77. HERACLITUS, Fragment 81 (Kahn, 41 §xxviii).

78. I lift this phrase not from Jean Baudrillard's essay on *Simulacra and Simulation* (1985) nor from Slavoj Žižek's lecture on 'The Passions of the Real' (2001) but from that well-known wasteland-film of the last decade, Laurence and Andrew Wachowski's *The Matrix* (1999). 'In the distance, we see the ruins of a future city protruding from the wasteland like the blackened ribs of a long-dead corpse,' they write; this is 'the desert of the real' according to the film's Mercury or Hermes character, Morpheus (see page 39 of the film-script). [Note: in the time-period between when this chapter was written and the present, revised edition, Laurence and Andrew, a.k.a. Larry and Andy, have since become (and are now-known-as) Larry and Lily].

thought of Samuel Beckett. Their having 'much in common' and their 'sustained parallelism' indeed precludes the straightforward precluding of a 'deep rapport' between the two works.

In the first book of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle took note of the common principle shared by Pythagoras's most notorious student Hippasus of Metapontum ('drowned', as Beckett says by way of *Murphy*'s Pythagorean philosopher Neary, 'for having divulged the incommensurability of side and diagonal')⁷⁹ and Heraclitus, the younger contemporary who had both praise⁸⁰ and criticism⁸¹ for the master of Hippasus, Pythagoras of Samos. 'Fire is the material principle according to Hippasus and Heraclitus', he states straightforwardly.⁸² The tenth century Byzantine encyclopedia known as the *Suda* further suggests that Heraclitus 'was a pupil of Xenophanes and of Hippasus the Pythagorean':⁸³ a suggestion further supporting and indeed underscoring the 'relation between Heraclitus and Hippasus', as Philip Wheelwright says.⁸⁴ 'There is an ancient tradition that Heraclitus had been a pupil of the Pythagorean philosopher Hippasus' who 'like Heraclitus believed that the universe is in a state of incessant change and that it consists of fire as its primal element', Wheelwright reiterates in his study of the works of Heraclitus.⁸⁵

If one were searching for unlikely and rather uncanny one-to-one correlations between these stories (those of Pythagoras and Heraclitus on the one hand, those of Eliot and Beckett on the other), I suppose that Beckett's friend Thomas MacGreevy, who 'introduced Beckett to many of his acquaintances in art and literary circles in Paris, London, and Dublin' including James Joyce, Jack Yeats, Charles Prentice, Richard Aldington, and T. S. Eliot himself,⁸⁶ would be a Hippasus to the

79. *Murphy*, 47.

80. 'Pythagoras [...] pursued inquiry further than all other men'; Fragment 129 (Kahn, 39 §xxv).

81. 'Pythagoras was the prince of imposters', being *polymathein* (a *polymath*, having 'much learning') yet *kakotechnein* (a manipulator, full of 'artful knavery'); Fragments 81 and 129 (Kahn, 41 §xxviii and 39 §xxv).

82. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* I, 984A, 7.

83. *Suda* ETA, §472; see the online translation-in-progress at www.stoa.org.

84. PHILIP WHEELWRIGHT, *Heraclitus* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1964), 114.

85. WHEELWRIGHT, *Heraclitus*, 9.

86. See the 'Profiles' subsection of the 'Appendix' in *Letters*, 704–705. 'Thomas MacGreevy, whose book on Eliot generated [Beckett's] *Proust* (qv), initiated a meet-

Beckett Heraclitus and the Eliot Pythagoras. But my interest here is not an interest in this kind of character-mapping, nor is it a concern with questions of influence—that of Pythagoras on Heraclitus or of Eliot on Beckett.⁸⁷ What interests me is the ‘parallelism’ at work in the works of both Beckett and Eliot, most specifically their parallel evocation of Pythagorean, Hippasian and Heraclitean ideas in pursuit of what the last of these called the ‘search’ for the ‘self’ (‘I went in search of myself’ he wrote in Fragment 101).⁸⁸ Indeed the argument of the present paper is that—even taking into account Eliot’s conversion and religious reorientation at the end of June in 1927⁸⁹—the works of Eliot and of Beckett remain at once both Heraclitean and Pythagorean, or fundamentally Hippasian⁹⁰ in orientation, and that their ‘orientation’ is an orientation directed toward a search for the self: an auto-speleology or in the words of Samuel Beckett an onto-speleology.⁹¹

‘How can I be the object of my own search?’ asks translator Charles Kahn with respect to this Heraclitean undertaking.⁹² In answer to this question he suggests, quite rightly, that such auto- or onto-speleology ‘will make sense only if my “self” is somehow absent, hidden, or difficult to find. Thus [the statement “I searched for myself”] states, or presupposes, what one might have thought was a distinctly modern’ if not modernist ‘reading of the Delphic *gnōthi seauton*:⁹³ self-knowledge is difficult because a man is divided from himself; he presents a problem for himself to resolve.’⁹⁴ The individual is, in sum, a dividual problem (which we will later call, by way of Malfatti di Montereaggio, the problem of the metaphysico-mathematical moi[ety]).⁹⁵ ‘We are

ing between Beckett and Eliot, which led to Beckett’s review of Rilke for *The Criterion* (July 1934); but Beckett’s vitriolic disparagement of Rilke’s relation to God did not lead to further commissions’ (ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 167).

87. Like Michael EDWARDS in his untranslated *Éloge de Lattente: T. S. Eliot et Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 1996), 13, ‘je ne m’intéresserai pas à la possibilité que Eliot ait influencé Beckett’.

88. HERACLITUS, Fragment 101 (Kahn, 41 §XXVIII).

89. Eliot converted to ‘Anglo-Catholicism’ (Anglicanism) on the 29th day of June in 1927, much to the shock of friends and fellow poets like Ezra Pound.

90. Here taking Hippasus as their mutual interstice/interconnection.

91. KNOWLSON & PILLING, *Frescoes*, xiii.

92. KAHN, *Heraclitus*, 116.

93. *Gnōthi seauton* in Greek, *nosce te ipsum* in Latin.

94. KAHN, *Heraclitus*, 116.

95. Malfatti, *Études*, 8.

surprisingly close here to the modern or Christian idea that a person may be alienated from his own (true) self', Kahn concludes.⁹⁶ The '(true) self' here,⁹⁷ however, is not a stable subjectivity, not a fixed and definite identity; it is more akin to the algebraic *x*, the mathematical 'unknown' which the Renaissance algebraists known as the *cossists* opted to designate by the *z* of 'zero';⁹⁸ in sum, the unknown *x* or near-zero *z*. The algebraic *x* is the marker of what is unknown and yet essential to a given operation; it is also the marker that is used as a kind of check-mate or counter-point to the check-mark: the latter a marker of success, the former a marker of failure. In addition to its use as the marker of failure and of the unknown, *x* is also used as a signature for those who cannot write their name (the illiterate, for example). The *x* in sum is the signature of the illiterate, incorrect and incognito (*in*: not, *cognitus*: known); what it designates is designated without a proper word, without a proper resolution, without a proper conception.

LOGOCLASM—THE LITERATURE OF THE UNWORD

In their respective search for the self, their respective auto- and onto-speleology, Beckett and Eliot proceeded in parallel fashion toward what Eliot in his post-conversion poem 'Ash Wednesday' (1930) described as 'the word unheard'⁹⁹ (*logos alogos*) and in his pre-conversion poem 'Gerontion' (1920) described as 'The word within a word, unable to speak a word,/ Swaddled with darkness':¹⁰⁰ a direction, on either of the dividing or converting line, toward what one could call, echoing Eliot, the 'unword' or the 'non-word'—coincidentally the two translations of the Unwort found in Beckett's 1937 letter to the German translator and dramaturge, Axel Kaun.

96. KAHN, *Heraclitus*, 116.

97. The brackets are Kahn's.

98. See Amir ACZEL, *Descartes' Secret Notebook: A True Tale of Mathematics, Mysticism, and the Quest to Understand the Universe* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 121.

99. 'Ash Wednesday', §IV, *CPP*, 64.

100. 'Gerontion', *CPP*, 21.

It is indeed getting more and more difficult, even pointless, for me to write in formal English. And more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get at those things (or the nothingness) lying behind it. [...] On the road toward this [...] very desirable literature of the non-word, [...] Let's do as that crazy mathematician who used to apply a new principle of measurement at each individual step of the calculation. Word-storming in the name of beauty.¹⁰¹

[...] As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute. To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it (be it something or nothing) begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today.¹⁰²

This boring of one hole after another into language, letting it fall into disrepute—this 'assault against words'¹⁰³ or 'word-storming'¹⁰⁴ that is likened to the work of a 'mad mathematician'¹⁰⁵ whose every step is different and alters in its perambulation the very principle of measurement—is the work of the logoclast, literally the one who bores into, breaks apart, 'tear[s]' up and/or 'tear[s]' down the fabric 'veil' of words, according to Beckett. 'I am starting a Logoclasts's League', he wrote in a 1937 letter to the novelist and playwright Mary Manning Howe; 'I am the only member at present. The idea is ruptured writing, so that the void may protrude like a hernia.'¹⁰⁶

The fact that the logoclastic principle is 'a new principle [...] at each individual step' would seem to suggest that any common principle in the respective works of Eliot and Beckett would have to be a 'common principle' of constant change—which is indeed the suggestion proposed in the present paper. As is stated in one of Heraclitus' most famous fragments, 'One cannot step into the same river twice'

101. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 518, 520.

102. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

103. *Ibid.*, 173.

104. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 520.

105. *Op. cit.*

106. Beckett to Howe, 11-07-37, *Letters*, 521 n. 8.

since 'it forms and dissolves, it approaches and departs': 'it scatters and then again gathers'.¹⁰⁷ Logoclassm requires a 'crazy mathematic[s]' wherein the mad poet or mathematician is always 'Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt/ Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure' as Eliot stated in the second of his *Four Quartets*.¹⁰⁸ 'And so each venture/ Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate/ With shabby equipment always deteriorating'.¹⁰⁹ The work of literature, the creative work—in this case the logoclastic 'literature of the unword' or 'literature of the non-word'—is thus in principle the work of an always alternating, ever changing, constantly differing deterioration: a perpetual 'falling into disrepute'¹¹⁰ and a gathering there of 'the void' which 'protrude[s]' in this dissolution and deterioration like a herniation.¹¹¹ The principle in play is one in which 'corruption is generation',¹¹² as Beckett said with regard to Bruno in his 'Dante... Bruno.Vico..Joyce' of 1929.

Logoclassm or the *Literatur des Unworts*¹¹³ is thus the literature of the void understood as that unnameable, indiscernable 'something or nothing' behind the 'mask' or 'veil' of words:¹¹⁴ the literature of the *non-word* or *un-word* 'within' a word, 'unable to speak a word,/ Swaddled with darkness'.¹¹⁵ As Beckett himself suggested, its *poesis* or poetic principle is akin to that of the mad mathematician—we might point, for example, to that of the Nolan (Giordano Bruno), 'which is certainly not mathematical but [rather, a] *mathesis*', as Frances Yates explained in her now-classic study of Bruno and Hermeticism.¹¹⁶ *Mathesis* for Bruno functions much as set-theoretical mathematics—that 'infinite mathematics' which drove Cantor and Gödel literally mad—functions for Badiou: that is, as one of the four procedural paths to the unnameable, inconsistent, indiscernable and ultimately

107. HERACLITUS, *Fragment* 91 (Kahn, 53 §LI).

108. *Four Quartets*, §II: v, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 128.

109. *Ibid.*

110. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

111. Beckett to Howe, 11-07-37, *Letters*, 521 n. 8.

112. 'Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce', *Disjecta*, 19.

113. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 173 and *Letters*, 515.

114. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 171 and *Letters*, 518.

115. 'Gerontion', *CPP*, 21.

116. Frances YATES, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 302.

infinite truth. Where Bruno lists *mathesis*, *magic*, *art* and *love* as his four parallel paths (his procedural quad or quartet),¹¹⁷ Badiou lists his four procedural paths as being *scientific*, *political*, *artistic* and *amorous*.¹¹⁸ In both cases the procedures involve a certain kind of inspired ignorance¹¹⁹—hence the title of Bruno’s ‘dialogue so strangely entitled *Idiota Triumphans* [...] is highly significant’,¹²⁰ for one proceeds along a given path without knowing its end and yet nevertheless ‘affirming’ and indeed ‘faithful to’ this actually unknown (presently unknown) ‘end’.¹²¹

The theme of the *Idiota Triumphans* is that [the ‘Triumphant Idiot’] has spoken from ‘inspired ignorance’. [...] This is worked out via an analysis of the kind of inspiration which can come to simple people who speak in an inspired way without fully understanding what they are saying, as compared with the higher types who have a fully conscious grasp of their inspired message. [...] [The] Triumphal Idiot [...] has shown forth a divine truth which he does not himself understand but which those with deeper insight—such as the Nolan—can acclaim as a wonderful revelation. Later on [in the study] it is said quite clearly that it is by ‘*mathesis*’ that [his inspired] figure is to be mystically interpreted, after the manner of the Pythagoreans and the[ir] [...] mathematical figures used not ‘mathematically’ but with ‘Pythagorean intentions’.¹²²

117. Ibid., 324.

118. ‘There are four types of generic procedure: artistic, scientific, political, and amorous. These are the four sources of truth’, he writes (BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 510).

119. BECKETT, *Proust* (New York: Grove Press, 1931), 64.

120. YATES, *Bruno*, 296.

121. Bruno likens this to the enthusiasm that in antiquity took on four forms or formulations: the scientific and/or mathematical, the religious and/or political, the artistic and/or poetical, the erotic and/or faithful, under the inspiration of Apollo, Dionysus, the three (or sometimes nine) Muses (*Aoidē*, *Meletē*, and *Mnēmē*: Song, Practice, and Memory) and the Phoenician Aphrodite otherwise known as the Egyptian Hathor or the Roman Venus (ibid., 281).

122. Ibid., 296–297.

It is in his study of Proust (1931) rather than his 'Dante...Bruno. Vico..Joyce' (1929) that Beckett takes up the Nolan's triumphant notion—Bruno's articulation of a Keatsian 'negative capability' *avant la lettre*. It is by the artist's 'inspired omissions', indeed triumphant 'failure[s]',¹²³ that 'the work of art' is 'neither created nor chosen, but discovered, uncovered, excavated, pre-existing within the artist—a law of his nature'.¹²⁴ The 'law of his nature' that the artist in his 'failure' uncovers 'pre-existing within' himself, which Eliot in his early essay on 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' likened to the law of 'his own generation in his bones',¹²⁵ is the law not only of artistic ontogenesis but indeed of *autogenesis*, of the artist's very *individuation*. It is an individuation 'uncovered' only by way of individual deterioration, through the artist's 'continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable' (Eliot):¹²⁶ namely that 'something or nothing' behind the 'veil' or 'mask' of his 'language' (Beckett).¹²⁷ 'The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of the personality', explained Eliot:¹²⁸ a 'process of depersonalisation'¹²⁹ in which a 'pre-existing' principle,¹³⁰ a pre-existing, always-alternating tradition,¹³¹ is 'uncovered'—the principle that 'corruption is generation',¹³² that the *wasting away* of those who 'inhabit [...] the waste land'¹³³ is itself an *unwording*, a *Literatur des Unworts*,¹³⁴ a 'ruptured writing' that lets 'the void' of being emerge as a hieroglyph of herniation.¹³⁵

123. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

124. *Ibid.*

125. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (ed. Frank Kermode, London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 38.

126. *Ibid.*, 40. Gontarski's word for the continual surrender of the self in the work of Samuel Beckett is 'undoing' (see his study of *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985).

127. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 518.

128. *Op. cit.*, 38.

129. *Op. cit.*, 38.

130. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

131. *Op. cit.*, 37-44.

132. 'Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce', *Disjecta*, 19.

133. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 168.

134. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 173 and *Letters*, 515.

135. Beckett to Howe, 11-07-37, *Letters*, 521 n. 8.

To summarise: The veritable void of being is uncovered, excavated, by 'inspired omissions':¹³⁶ 'holes' bored one after another in the fabric of the worded world, which ultimately allow this void to 'protrude like a hernia'.¹³⁷ This void of being is pre-individual, 'pre-existing within the artist' and as such 'pre-existing [...] the artist, a law of his nature'.¹³⁸ Now (proceeding onward from this short summarisation) Beckett called this pre-existing, always-alternating 'law'¹³⁹ the one and only 'reality': a reality accessible only 'by the hieroglyphics traced by inspired perception'.¹⁴⁰ Bruno called these hieroglyphic herniations 'mathesistical [...] diagrams'¹⁴¹—diagrams that are 'certainly not mathematical' in the normative sense of the word but precisely a '*mathesis*'.¹⁴² Yates provides an example from Bruno's *Figuratio Aristotelici Physici Auditus*, 'one of the most obscure of all Bruno's works—and that is saying a great deal'.¹⁴³ The hieroglyph in question 'has something of the appearance of the square in which the houses of a horoscope are drawn, but gone mad, and breaking up into all kinds of irregular geometrical figures'.¹⁴⁴ In her recent study entitled *Iconic Spaces: The Dark Theology of Samuel Beckett*, Sandra Wynands likens Beckett's herniated geometries or convoluted hieroglyphs to the 'icons' of early Christianity, albeit in this case icons configured for purposes of iconoclasm, for the purposes of unveiling the veiled void.¹⁴⁵ These geometries are here examined instead as a *mathesis* wherein 'mathematical figures [are] used not "mathematically" but with "Pythagorean intentions";'¹⁴⁶ 'Pythagorean intentions' that were disseminated

136. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

137. Op. cit.

138. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

139. This ever-flowing, always-alternating 'law' could in French be called the *molle* (soft/amorphous) *loi* (law/logos): this amorphous/metamorphous law/logos (*molle-loi*) resounding of *Molloy*, one of the faces of the Unnamable.

140. Ibid.

141. YATES, BRUNO, 314. He also calls them 'hieroglyphs' of course (see pages 163–164, 166, 263, 283, 416–418, 420–422).

142. Ibid., 302.

143. Ibid., 302.

144. Ibid., 302.

145. Sandra WYNANDS, *Iconic Spaces: The Dark Theology of Samuel Beckett* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2007).

146. Op. cit., 296–297.

to Heraclitus the Ephesian by the Pythagorean renegade Hippasus of Metapontum.

MATHESIS—THE METAPHYSICO-MATHEMATICAL ZERO-SUM

It is striking that prior to his appearance on the great stage and in the global theatre of philosophy—philosophy's *theatrum mundi*¹⁴⁷—René Descartes, the first modern philosopher, attempted to revive this very same *mathesis*, 'the ancients' treatment of mathematics', which he, like they, construed 'as a preamble to wisdom': a necessary pre-existing precondition to philosophy, the faithful and loving pursuit of wisdom—in other words a necessary precondition 'not just to mathematics but also to fundamental knowledge of all kinds'.¹⁴⁸ As Dennis Sepper states in his study of Descartes, on the threshold of his emergence onto the public stage or theatre of world-philosophy, the latter 'reflected on a demand made by ancient thinkers: that one learn *mathesis*, the way of cognitive discipline, as a prerequisite to the study of wisdom'.¹⁴⁹ Plato, however, 'spoke of geometry rather than *mathesis*'—hence the warning etched in stone over the entrance to his Academy: *ageōmetrētos mēdeis eisitō*, 'no non-geometers may enter'.¹⁵⁰ The proto-'Descartes's *mathesis*', which hearkens back to pre-Platonic (Pythagorean) antiquity, 'radicalises the admonition: [the precondition for Descartes is to] learn not "mathematics" but the foundation of everything that is learnable, the *mathesis universalis*'.¹⁵¹

The *mathesis*, however, only appears (or rather, is hidden) in Descartes's unpublished notes—explicitly in his unfinished early treatise on the *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (Rules for the Direction of the Mind) and implicitly in both the *Opuscules*' 'Cogitationes privatae' (his 'Private Cogitations', specifically the so-called 'Mathematical Treasure-Trove of Polybus the Cosmopolitan' outlined therein)¹⁵²

147. DESCARTES, 'Cogitationes privatae', DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 213.

148. Dennis SEPPER, *Descartes's Imagination: Proportion, Images, and the Activity of Thinking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 150.

149. Ibid.

150. Ibid. Descartes ascribes this saying to Pythagoras; see his *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, §IV; DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 375b.

151. Op. cit.

152. DESCARTES, 'Cogitationes privatae', *Œuvres*, vol. x, 214.

and in the so-called 'Secret Notebook',¹⁵³ the *Progymnasmata de solidorum elementis* (Warm-Up Exercises for the Solid Elements [Elemental Solids of Pythagoras]),¹⁵⁴ both of which were transcribed after Descartes's death by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. References to *mathesis* or to the *Thesaurus mathematicus*, the 'Treasure-Trove' of mathematics, are nowhere to be found in the works that Descartes himself published—the works of the world-renowned and world-recognised philosopher Descartes (the 'Descartes' with whom the philosophical world is so familiar), who 'advanced masked' (*larvatus prode*) onto the stage of the 'world theatre' (*theatrum mundi*).¹⁵⁵ *Mathesis*, in other words, remained larvally hidden under the mask of his public *personam*, like a proverbial skeleton in the closet. 'Ut comædi, moniti ne in fronte appareat pudor, personam induunt, sic ego hoc mundi teatrum consensurus, in quo hactenus spectator exstiti, larvatus prode' wrote Descartes in his notebook: 'Just as actors are counseled not to let shame appear on their faces, and so put on a mask, likewise now that I am about to mount the stage of the world, where I have so far been a spectator, I come forward masked'.¹⁵⁶

Beckett in his first published poem, *Whoroscope*, unmasks Descartes from a perspective akin to that of Gottfried Leibniz—that is, from a *post-mortem* perspective, working from note-transcriptions that span Descartes's entire life, from before his rise to fame (the time before 'he is about to mount the stage of the world') to his untimely death in the court of that 'murdering matinal pope-confessed amazon,/ Christina the ripper', Queen of Sweden.¹⁵⁷ Descartes before and after his reign as the first modern philosopher, before and after his being ensconced upon this throne—Descartes, in sum, both throned and dethroned—is likened in Beckett's *Whoroscope* to the *exemple*

153. See ACZEL for an entertaining exposition.

154. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 257–263.

155. *Ibid.*, 213.

156. *Ibid.*

157. *Whoroscope* 1–6. Lawrence HARVEY suggests that in *Whoroscope* 'the fictional Descartes, who occupies a kind of middle ground between the real philosopher, René Descartes, and the poet, Samuel Beckett—shifting now closer to one, now to the other—moves decidedly in the direction of the poet-author and away from the philosopher-source' (*Samuel Beckett, Poet and Critic*, 38).

par excellence of larval being: an egg.¹⁵⁸ ‘What’s that? An egg?’¹⁵⁹ ‘An egg’ and/or a ‘double-breasted turd’.¹⁶⁰ T. S. Eliot—the very ‘T. Eliot’ whose name ‘spelled backward’ (as Beckett reminds their mutual friend Thomas MacGreevy) ‘is toilet’¹⁶¹—also endeavoured in his work, in the words of Jewel Spears Brooker and the anonymous author of the leading *Times Literary Supplement* article of 09-09-1926, a ‘Dethronement of Descartes’.¹⁶²

This ‘dethronement’ however is not a simple counter-Cartesianism; rather, it knocks the philosopher from his throne¹⁶³ in order to let the preconditions of and for the Cartesian *cogito* come to the fore and/or floor. The focus, in other words, is not on the sovereign subject of the crowned Cartesian *cogito* but on that which this crowned *cogito* is NOT—or rather, on the NOT from whence the crowned *cogito* is: the ‘failure’ (the *échec* in French, or in the Latin of Descartes the *pudor*: the shameful misstep or embarrassing blunder¹⁶⁴—the ‘failure’ or *échec* again) from whence our individual personæ produce themselves as makeshift masks.

158. In ‘A Cartesian Egg: Alchemy in Beckett’s Early Works’ (*Journal of Beckett Studies* 9.2, 2000, 63–80), Minako OKAMURO notes that the protagonist of Beckett’s abandoned *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* admitted that ‘there is a long poem waiting to be written about hens and eggs. There is a great subject there, waiting to be written’. ‘When he wrote *Dream*, [however]’ Okamuro points out, ‘Beckett had already written two poems in which the “hens and eggs” motif appeared: “For Future Reference” and “Whoroscope”, both written in 1930’ (69); Okamuro’s essay proposes that the ‘philosopher’s egg’ of alchemy is a major theme in Beckett’s *œuvre* (i.e., in the ‘long poem’ of his collected works), from the earliest poems onward. ‘Beckett further developed the motif of the egg into the large hollow sphere of Murphy’s mind [in *Murphy*] [...] [and into] the big talking ball [of the Unnamable] in *The Unnamable*, which calls itself an egg’ (74).

159. *Whoroscope*, 1.

160. *Ibid.*, 4.

161. Samuel Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, 09-01-37, *Letters*, 421. The intimate relation between ‘toilet’ and ‘turds’ is here duly [foot]noted.

162. Jewel Spears BROOKER, *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 173. ‘The Dethronement of Descartes’ is the title of both the *TLS* article and of the chapter in Brooker’s subsequent study.

163. Here one hears the ‘toilet’ again.

164. The flush of embarrassment described by Descartes as that which the *personam* is put on to mask (*Œuvres*, vol. x, 213) brings us by a *commodius vicus* of recirculation back to the ‘toilet’ again (see Samuel Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, 09-01-37, *Letters*, 421).

This 'dethronement' retrospectively reveals the ontological condition of the *cogito* to be the condition of a Cartesian 'Humpty Dumpty' or existential ovoid: 'a fundamental convergence between science and myth, embryology and mythology, the biological egg and the psychic or cosmic egg,' as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari state in *A Thousand Plateaus*.¹⁶⁵ Every self-configuration, every self-conception, every *cogito* as such, differentiates itself from and within the context of the ovoid's 'intensive reality,' its 'milieu of pure intensity'.¹⁶⁶ The 'Dethronement of Descartes' in a sense 'enthrones' the at-once natal and fatal, post- and proto-, 'Descartes' of Beckett's *Whoroscope*, which William Bysshe Stein in his 'Turdy Ooscopy' (1975) likened in pre-Paul-Auster and pre-Gilles-Deleuze fashion¹⁶⁷ to the Humpty Dumpty of Mother Goose nursery-rhymes. The 'Dethronement of Descartes' and 'enthronement' of Humpty Dumpty is characterised by Stein as an act of Ooscopy or Oomantia, of seeing the universe not in a grain of sand but in an egg 'hatched from eight to ten days'.¹⁶⁸ In the [W]horoscope of Ooscopy or Oomancy both the individuated 'egg-head authoritarianism of Humpty Dumpty' that one finds in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (not to mention in Deleuze's treatise on *The Logic of Sense*) and the larval, embryonic, individuating 'intuitions of the hierophant-poet as typified in [...] Vedic India'¹⁶⁹ 'fuse'¹⁷⁰ according to Stein: they are found to be 'in-folded' like 'the

165. Gilles DELEUZE & Félix GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 164.

166. 'The egg is the milieu of pure intensity, [...] Zero intensity as principle of production' (DELEUZE & GUATTARI, 164).

167. Prior to Paul AUSTER's *City of Glass*, 1985, and Gilles DELEUZE's *Mille plateaux*, 1980.

168. *Whoroscope*, 1–6.

169. William Bysshe STEIN, 'Beckett's *Whoroscope* Ooscopy', *ELH (English Literary History)* 42.1 (Spring 1975), 126. In the note to this strange assertion (154 n. 2), Stein points his reader in the direction of Johan HUIZINGA's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), and specifically to the section devoted to 'esoteric and wonder-working wisdom' where Huizinga discussed those 'competitions in esoteric knowledge' wherein 'questions which the hierophants put to one another [...] are riddles in the fullest sense of the word' (HUIZINGA, 105). 'The poet-priest is here continually knocking at the door of the Unknowable, as closed to him as it is to us. All we can say of these venerable texts is that in them we are witnessing the birth of philosophy' (HUIZINGA, 107).

170. STEIN, 'Beckett's *Whoroscope* Ooscopy', 125.

fire and the rose' at the end of Eliot's *Four Quartets*.¹⁷¹ This fusion is 'A condition of complete simplicity' according to Eliot—one 'Costing not less than everything'.¹⁷² 'Everything' is 'in-folded' into this physico-metaphysical ovoid.

This physico-metaphysical ovoid was described as 'the fundamental hieroglyph' and 'degree zero' of *mathesis* in the Deleuzian equivalent of Descartes's *Progymnasmata de solidorum elementis*.¹⁷³ namely, Deleuze's introduction to Christien Ostrowski's 1946 French translation of Giovanni Malfatti di Montereaggio's *Studies on the Anarchy and Hierarchy of Knowledge*.¹⁷⁴ 'The *Mathesis* as Hieroglyph and Symbolism of the Universe's Threefold Life, or the Mystical Organon of the Ancient Hindus'.¹⁷⁵ Deleuze's introduction to the translation (which Ostrowski translated as *Études sur la Mathèse, ou Anarchie et Hiérarchie de la Science*) was an essay entitled 'Mathesis, Science and Philosophy',¹⁷⁶ 'one of a group of five texts he published in the period 1945–1947, which he subsequently repudiated and omitted from French bibliographies of his work'.¹⁷⁷ Just as Descartes's early work on *mathesis* was relegated to the *theatrum mundi*'s off-stage shadows and wasteland,¹⁷⁸ so too was Deleuze's early work on *mathesis*, and

171. *Four Quartets*, §IV: v, 'Little Gidding', CPP, 145. Giovanni Malfatti di Montereaggio, to whom we turn our attention in the following paragraphs, likened this fusion to that of the *yin*-within-*yang* and *yang*-within-*yin* in Chinese thought—indeed the various permutations of 'yin-within-*yang* and *yang*-within-*yin*' relationships calculated in well-nigh Pythagorean (*tetractys*-like) fashion in the Chinese 'Book of Changes', the *Yi Jing*—see for example Malfatti, 13.

172. *Four Quartets*, §IV: v, 'Little Gidding', CPP, 145.

173. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 257–263.

174. Giovanni Malfatti di Montereaggio (Johann Malfatti von Montereaggio), *Studien über Anarchie und Hierarchie des Wissens, mit besonderer Beziehung auf die Medicin* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1845), §1.

175. 'Die Mathesis als Hieroglyphe und Symbolik des Dreifachen Weltlebens oder das Mystische Organon der alten Hindus'.

176. Gilles Deleuze, 'Mathèse, Science et Philosophie', 'Introduction' to Giovanni Malfatti di Montereaggio (Jean Malfatti de Montereaggio), *Études sur la Mathèse, ou Anarchie et Hiérarchie de la Science* (trans. Christien Ostrowski, Paris: Éditions du Griffon d'Or, 1946), ix–xxiv.

177. Christian Kerslake, 'The Somnambulist and the Hermaphrodite: Gilles Deleuze, Johann Malfatti and Occultism', in *Culture Machine* 9.1 (2007).

178. One might also say 'le désert intérieur'. ('During his early years at the Sorbonne between 1944 and 1948, Deleuze participated in monthly salons organised by the wealthy banker Marcel Moré, a friend of Georges Bataille. In the leftist Catholic con-

yet in many respects these thinkers never left this context and carried on the mathetic work throughout their lives, as Pierre Costabel and Jean-Luc Marion suggest with respect to Descartes¹⁷⁹ and as Christian Kerslake suggests with respect to Deleuze.¹⁸⁰

TETRACT—THE FOURFOLD [OF] 1 + 2 + 3 + 4

As if presaging this last point—that although both Descartes and Deleuze relegated their study of *mathesis* to the margins of their ‘proper’ public work they can nevertheless be said never to have left it—Deleuze notes with respect to Descartes that ‘the Cartesian case is all the more interesting in that Descartes never renounced [...] the *mathesis universalis*’¹⁸¹ (nor, arguably, did he himself, even in the wake of his ‘repudiation’). Indeed, a remarkable characteristic of the *mathesis universalis* introduced in Deleuze’s early essay ‘is precisely that it can be ignored, denied, betrayed’ and ‘broken apart’¹⁸² and yet

text of the soirées at Moré’s apartment and the so-called *Sessions de la Firtelle* hosted in medievalist Marie Madelaine Davy’s grand *château* as “cover” for Resistance activities, [...] Deleuze came to write the introduction to a republication, by a private press specializing in esoteric works, of Johann Malfatti de Montereaggio’s nineteenth-century esoteric work *Mathesis: Studies on the Anarchy and Hierarchy of Knowledge*, explains Robin MACKAY in the ‘Editorial Introduction’ to the *Unknown Deleuze issue of Collapse: The Journal of Philosophical Research and Development*, volume III, 2007, 17. He points interested readers in the direction of Jean MONCELON’s *Marie Madelaine Davy ou le désert intérieur*, Paris: Cahiers d’Orient et d’Occident, 2006).

179. See *Règles utiles et claires pour la direction de l’esprit en la recherche de la vérité par René Descartes: Traduction selon le lexique cartésien et annotation conceptuelle par Jean-Luc Marion avec des notes mathématiques de Pierre Costabel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977) and *Exercices pour les éléments des solides: Essai en complément d’Euclide—Le progymnasmata de solidorum elementis par René Descartes: Édition critique avec introduction. Traduction, notes et commentaires par Pierre Costabel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987).

180. Christian KERSLAKE, *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum Books, 2007), ‘The Somnambulist and the Hermaphrodite’, and ‘The Esoteric History of Differential Philosophy: Deleuze, Józef Maria Hoëne-Wroński, and Francis Warrian on Difference and Repetition’, in *Deleuze’s Philosophical Heritage* (eds. Jonathan Roffe and Graham Jones, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 167–189.

181. DELEUZE in Malfatti, x, anonymously translated into English as ‘Mathesis, Science and Philosophy’ in the *Unknown Deleuze issue of Collapse: The Journal of Philosophical Research and Development*, volume III, (2007), 162.

182. DELEUZE, ‘Mathèse, Science et Philosophie’, xiii, xi; DELEUZE in *Collapse*, 145, 142.

'finds its true sense in re-forming upon another plane'—that is, 'every attempt' to ignore, deny, betray or break it 'is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure' as Eliot states.¹⁸³

This is explained in the study of *mathesis* which Deleuze's essay introduces,¹⁸⁴ but in a manner that seems to presage the thought of Badiou more than that of Deleuze; for just as Badiou argues that being 'is void, cleaved, a-substantial and ir-reflexive'¹⁸⁵ so does Malfatti explain that *mathesis* as 'the hieroglyph of the human' is 'the metaphysico-mathematical zero': 'the zero as ellipse and ellipsoid all at once, as the milieu between metaphysics and mathematics, their 'interfocal zone'.¹⁸⁶ Malfatti stresses the void of the ovoid, 'zero' as 'the ellipsoid' or 'the egg' ('*l'ellipsoïde*'/'*l'œuf*') that forms the 'empty, shadowy contour' ('*un contour vide, ombreux*') of our very selves and that seems, as void, to be devoid of content, to be nothing, ni[hi], null. '*Le zéro métaphysico-mathématique nous semble être nul, n'être rien, tandis que, dans le cas contraire, il est tout*': 'the metaphysico-mathematical zero, this void, seems devoid of content, whereas on the contrary the void is anything but devoid of content—the void indeed is all'.¹⁸⁷

Malfatti makes this claim with reference to the tetractys or decad ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$) of the Pythagoreans, a figure that figures on the fifth page of Beckett's first novel, *Murphy*, as an emblem of the loftiest

183. *Four Quartets*, §11: v, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 128.

184. Whereas Deleuze in his introduction emphasises the 'complicity' of each individual number with the 'hieroglyph or [...] cipher' of metaphysico-mathematical zero (i.e., the *mathesis universalis*), a 'complicity' wherein each number interiorises the *mathesis*, or rather has always already 'interiorised that universal, realised the universal on its own account, and defined itself as a microcosm' (DELEUZE, 'Mathèse, Science et Philosophie', xii–xiii, xix, xiii; DELEUZE in *Collapse*, 144–145, 151, 145), Malfatti explains the persistence of *mathesis* even in its utter negation in a manner that prefigures some of the themes of Deleuze's doctoral dissertation (*Difference and Repetition*) and 'Method of Dramatisation' (*Desert Islands and Other Texts*, 1953–1974). 'The "larval" or "embryonic" subject' found in the latter, and the claim that only such a subject can 'endure' those intensive differentiations, negations and transformations 'that are irreconcilable with a formed, qualified and composed subject, such as the subject of the *cogito* in representation' ('The Method of Dramatisation', in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, 1953–1974 (ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina, New York: Semiotexte, 2004, 94, 98), are in turn found in 'larval' or 'embryonic' form in Malfatti's *Études sur la Mathèse*, 'ex ovo, in ovo, et per ovum' (MALFATTI, 91).

185. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 3.

186. MALFATTI, 8.

187. *Ibid.*, 7, 10, 11.

possible love ('My tetrakyt!' exclaims the Pythagorean Neary,¹⁸⁸ likening the Pythagorean *tetractys* to the high-flying kite of his suspended/heart-stopping *kardia*).¹⁸⁹ The 'Most celebrated of [Pythagorean figures] was the *tetractys*', wrote Beckett in his *Notebooks*,¹⁹⁰ it is via this figure, represented by a triangle,¹⁹¹ that the Pythagoreans 'used to swear' their most solemn oaths¹⁹²—a figure 'which showed at a glance what they regarded as most important property of [the decad or] number 10, namely that it is the sum of first four natural integers ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$)'¹⁹³ and hence a fourfold figure that triangularly attests to the total tenfold: the numbers 1 to 10 which are thereafter repeated indefinitely.¹⁹⁴

1	1
2	2 3
3	4 5 6
4	7 8 9 10

More simply stated: the four layers or levels of its triangular heap (a heap of 'pebbles' in Beckett's *Notebooks*,¹⁹⁵ 'millet grains' and 'mo-

188. Murphy, 5.

189. 'Murphy had lately studied under a man in Cork called Neary. This man, at the time, could stop his heart more or less whenever he liked and keep it stopped, within reasonable limits, for as long as he liked. [...] Murphy's purpose in going to sit at Neary's feet was not to develop the Neary heart, which he thought would quickly prove fatal to a man of his temper, but simply to invest his own with a little of what Neary, at that time a Pythagorean, called the ἀρμονία' (the Pythagorean *palintonos harmoniē*); *ibid.*, 3.

190. From Samuel Beckett's *Trinity College Dublin* manuscripts, TCD manuscript 10967/21.1, quoted in Matthew FELDMAN, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (New York: Continuum Books, 2006), 69.

191. FELDMAN, *Beckett's Books*, 69.

192. *Ibid.*; 'it is frequently mentioned that the Pythagoreans [swore] their oath by the *tetractys*', explained Walter BURKERT in his monumental study *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. Edwin Minar, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 72.

193. *Op. cit.*

194. 'The *decadic* system is especially important [to the Pythagoreans], since to them all numbers after ten appear to be only repetitions of the first ten', e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 followed by [1]1, [1]2, [1]3, [1]4, [1]5, [1]6, [1]7, [1]8, [1]9, and so on (Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 136).

195. See FELDMAN, *Beckett's Books*, 69.

ments' in his *Endgame*)¹⁹⁶ 'mount up to a life'¹⁹⁷—an entire *aiōn*, as Heraclitus would say.¹⁹⁸ Every possible permutation, every calculable combination that could play-out over a life-span or *aiōn* plays itself *out of* or *out from* this 'impossible heap': the *aiōn*'s *tetractys* of $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$. 'Moment upon moment, pattering down, like the millet grains of [...] that old Greek, and all life long you wait for that to mount up to a life';¹⁹⁹ 'Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap.'²⁰⁰ This heap, this *aiōn*, encompasses one's all—the entirety of a life-span, its every possible permutation and potentiality—and yet in itself is void, no-thing, ni[hi]l. It is all and nothing. To bear witness to the *tetractys* as the all and nothing is to bear witness to 'Infinite emptiness [...] all around you': 'all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it', explains Hamm in Beckett's *Endgame*, 'and there you'll be'²⁰¹ like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe.²⁰² To bear witness to the *tetractys* as the all-and-nothing is to perceive it from the perspective of its utterly absurd 'middle' or 'mid-point' (which Beckett likened to the always-avoided 'danger zone')²⁰³ of its metaphysico-mathematical 'zero', 'o', or 'void ovoid': like a little bit of grit, a grain of millet, a little pebble, a single *psephon* amidst the *psēphoi*, in the middle of this utterly inconceivable yet somehow incontestable terrain.

This is precisely the perspective Malfatti takes in his *Mathesis*: the *tetractys* as the entirety of mathematics (the *mathesis universalis*) is in point of fact *pointless*—its every angle a palintonic *curvature*; hence what Pythagoras took to be a triangle is according to Malfatti the ovoid ellipsoid of an egg. Malfatti follows that fabulous genealogy which would make a *Pitha Guru* of Pythagoras²⁰⁴ and sees the

196. *Endgame*, 1, 70.

197. *Ibid.*

198. HERACLITUS, Fragment 52 (Kahn, 71 §XCIV).

199. *Endgame*, 70.

200. *Ibid.*, 1.

201. 'You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère' (see *The Waste Land*, § 1, 'The Burial of the Dead', *CPP*, 39; also see 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', KERMODE, *Selected Prose*, 40 re: you as you are at the moment).

202. *Op. cit.*, 36.

203. Beckett, *Quad*, in *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 293.

204. 'Pythagoras had travelled and learned much [...] in Egypt, Babylon, Crete, and perhaps even India, whence he would have acquired the designation Pitha Guru,'

roots of the Pythagorean *tetractys* in Vedic India and Indo-China, amongst 'the Indians and the Chinese who figured the *milieu* [or the *environment*, i.e., the *field*] of the decade in terms of the fundamental hieroglyph of the elliptical zero'.²⁰⁵ 'The numerical characters', 1 to 10, are 'nothing but [...] the modifications of the elliptical zero *qua* hieroglyph of man and world in time and space'.²⁰⁶ i.e., 'the exteriorisation'²⁰⁷ or 'exposition'²⁰⁸ of the void ovoid or 'ovum' ('œuf du monde').²⁰⁹ Stated the other way around, the *tetractys* as void ovoid of the *mathesis universalis*²¹⁰ in itself²¹¹ does not count, cannot be counted. The *tetractys* as egg or ovum of that which Badiou would call 'the pure multiple'²¹²—the 'empty, shadowy contour'²¹³ of the decad, according to Malfatti²¹⁴—is, according to Badiou but completely in keeping with Malfatti, that which is 'absolutely unrepresentable according to the count'.²¹⁵

but 'from the Greek point of view what he taught and practiced was a form of Orphism. [...] Thus to understand the riddle of Pythagoras we must confront the prior riddle of Orpheus, from whom tradition asserts that Pythagoras derived most of what we associate with the idea of Pythagoreanism, including the Numbers. Witness Iamblichus, who writes: "If anyone wishes to learn what were the sources whence these men derived so much piety, it must be said that a perspicuous paradigm of Pythagoric theology according to Numbers is in a certain respect to be found in the writings of Orpheus". [...] In other words, as Syrianus says, "The Pythagoreans received from the theology of Orpheus the principles of intelligible and intellectual numbers, assigning them an abundant progression and extending their dominion as far as sensibles themselves". See Christopher BAMFORD's 'Introduction' to the anthology entitled *Homage to Pythagoras: Rediscovering Sacred Science* (ed. Christopher Bamford, New York: Lindisfarne Press, 1980), 14. Reference might also be made here to Katherine KELLY's essay on 'The Orphic Mouth' in Beckett's *Not I*, published in the *Journal of Beckett Studies* 6 (Autumn 1980), 73–80.

205. Malfatti, 9.

206. Ibid., 11.

207. Ibid., 17.

208. Ibid., 57.

209. Ibid., 35.

210. The *mathesis universalis* or *decade*: the count from one to ten that is repeated in every subsequent quantum, all subsequent counts.

211. 'Thiérroglyphe renfermé en soi' (ibid., 11).

212. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 53.

213. Op. cit., 10.

214. Op. cit., 9.

215. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 53.

OVOID—VOID BEING OR BEING VOID

This egg or ovoid, being nothing, being void, is nevertheless 'as distinct from non-being as the "there is" is distinct from being': the 'being-nothing' of the void is not, in other words, 'non-being' (the latter being devoid of the 'there is'), it is the 'there is' that in the generation immediately preceding and overlapping that of Badiou the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas defined in terms of the 'there is' of 'irremissible existence':

Let us imagine all things, beings and persons returning to nothingness. What remains after this imaginary destruction of everything is not "something", but the fact that "there is" [*il y a*]. The absence of everything returns as a presence, as the place where the bottom has dropped out of everything, an atmospheric density, a plenitude of the void, or the murmur of silence. There is, after this destruction of things and beings, the impersonal "field of forces" of existing. There is something that is neither subject nor substantive. The fact of existing imposes itself when there is no longer anything. And it is anonymous: there is neither anyone nor anything that takes this existence upon itself. It is as impersonal as the "it" in "it is raining" or "it is hot". Existence returns no matter with what negation one dismisses it. "There is" as the irremissibility of pure existing.²¹⁶

To 'imagine' a return to the 'there is' of the void is (to lift the title of one of Beckett's later works) to imagine the death of all image and all imagination (*Imagination Dead Imagine*).²¹⁷ 'Try, just try, to imagine the death of your own imagination,' prods Christopher Ricks in his 1990 Clarendon Lectures on *Beckett's Dying Words*;²¹⁸ 'this [is as] inconceivable [as an] imagining of one's own death'²¹⁹ or 'the totality

216. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 46–47.

217. See BECKETT, *Imagination Dead Imagine* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966).

218. Christopher RICKS, *Beckett's Dying Words: The Clarendon Lectures 1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 45.

219. RICKS, *Beckett's Dying Words*, 46.

of vacancy which would imagine one's own burial.²²⁰ Ricks points out that very early on (in 1937, the year of his logoclastic letters to Mary Manning Howe and Axel Kaun) Beckett had associated such an inconceivable experience with the 'vision of positive annihilation' which so horrified the good Doctor Johnson.²²¹

In his letter of 03-07-37 to Joseph Hone, the translator of Daniel Halévy's 1909 *Vie de Friedrich Nietzsche* (Hone's *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1911) and the author of studies such as *William Butler Yeats* (1916) and *Bishop Berkeley: His Life, Writings and Philosophy* (1931), Beckett wrote approvingly of Samuel Johnson's—or perhaps of Samuel Johnson's friend John Taylor's²²²—'vision of positive annihilation.'²²³ Taylor, he wrote, 'reproached [the Doctor] [...] for holding the opinion that an eternity of torment was preferable to annihilation. He must have had the vision of positive annihilation. Of how many can as much be said?'²²⁴ Ricks relates this vision to a passage from Beckett's translation of the Mexican poet Juana de Asbaje: 'thou suspendest the deluded soul/ between a wretched and a happy lot,/ not to the end that life may be preserved,/ but to inflict a more protracted death.'²²⁵ This 'protracted death' is what horrified Doctor Johnson: the condition described by Stephen Dilks as that 'ongoing, barely thinkable' process of 'disintegration into nothingness' which 'would combine both the experience and the apprehension of annihilation without providing the value attached to "mere existence"'.²²⁶ What Levinas (in the indented quotation above) characterised as the irremissibility of existing even in the absence of every existent thing (in the absence of the existent things' 'mere existence'), his notion of an absence of everything that imposes itself as the atmospheric density of void plenitude, is analogous to the 'positive annihilation' that

220. Ibid., 47.

221. Ibid., 15–24.

222. 'Beckett's "He" (of "He must have had the vision of positive annihilation") floats rather free', notes Ricks, and 'it might fit Taylor better than Johnson' since it was Taylor, after all, who reproached the doctor for his fear of this annihilation (*Beckett's Dying Words*, 15 n. 31).

223. Beckett to Hone, 03-07-37, *Letters*, 509.

224. Ibid.

225. Juana de Asbaje, trans. Samuel Beckett, quoted in *Beckett's Dying Words*, 17.

226. See Stephen DILKS's essay on 'positive annihilation': 'Voices out of the Air: Freedom, Death and Constraint in Beckett's *All That Fall*', in *Samuel Beckett: A Case-book* (ed. Jennifer Jeffers, New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 87.

so frightened Doctor Johnson. As Dilks explains in his essay on the subject, 'Johnson could not incorporate such a frightening idea into the work published during his lifetime: the idea only emerged in personal conversations published by Boswell and other biographers after Johnson's death and in his secret "Prayers and Meditations", published posthumously.'²²⁷ *Positive annihilation* was, like the *mathesis universalis* of Descartes and of Deleuze, relegated to posthumously published 'Private Cogitations',²²⁸ 'Secret Notebooks',²²⁹ or 'repudiated and omitted' texts.²³⁰ And yet this was the idea that stirred the young Samuel Beckett into his 'first significant attempt to write a play':²³¹ his abandoned *Human Wishes* (the 'Dramatic Fragment' of which was published in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*)²³²

For Beckett, the idea of positive annihilation was a positive source of literary inspiration: Beckett eschewed the foundations of Neo-Classical and Romantic wisdom in favour of the "empty cisterns and exhausted wells" that form the central images of a century plagued by genocide, nuclear destruction, and the mass annihilation of civilian populations (*The Waste Land*, line 385). After 1937, Beckett dedicated himself to the task of exploring what had been, for Johnson, anathema to the job of the writer: [...] Turning the processes of exhaustion, dissipation and destruction into forces of creativity, he produced a canon of literature about death-in-life, celebrating what Johnson had cursed in a poem withheld until after his death: "Every endeavour, every avenue, ends in frustration, always" (*Gnothi Seauton*, line 41). From 1937 on Beckett accepted Johnson's reluctant futilitarianism as a foundational premise.²³³

227. Ibid., 87.

228. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 214.

229. See ACZEL, *Descartes' Secret Notebook*, for an entertaining exposition.

230. KERSLAKE, 'The Somnambulist and the Hermaphrodite'.

231. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, xxii.

232. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 153-166.

233. Op. cit., 87-88.

That Dilks, like Ricks before him, links Beckett's 'futilitarian' championing of 'positive annihilation' to Eliot's *Waste Land* accords with the spirit of the present paper. Indeed, Ricks even suggests that Beckett might have had Eliot in mind in addition to the life and statements of Samuel Johnson when he formulated the phrase: specifically Eliot's description, in an essay devoted to 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', of Wyndham Lewis as one for whom Shakespeare 'is a *positive nihilist*' (italics in the original). 'Beckett may have remembered the italicised *positive* with the adjacent paradox of *nihil*', wrote Ricks.²³⁴ In any case, one can say with certainty that Beckett's Hamm, like Eliot's Prufrock, is very much akin to Doctor Johnson and opposed to Shakespeare's Hamlet, their mutual *Übermensch*, with respect to positive annihilation: all three at once acknowledge and yet repudiate this disintegrative experience. To his own initial 'Let us go then'²³⁵ Prufrock ultimately says no: 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be.'²³⁶ Likewise Hamm, *Endgame*'s own [per]version of the royal figure Hamlet, gestures toward but ultimately doesn't 'go into the dark,/ The vacant [...] spaces, the vacant into the vacant' (lifting these lines from Eliot's second *Quartet*—the poem toward which Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* leads us, according to Michael Edwards in his *Éloge de l'attente: T. S. Eliot et Samuel Beckett*).²³⁷ Rather than 'Come in under the shadow' as in *The Waste Land*,²³⁸ rather than 'let the dark[ness] come' as in 'East Coker',²³⁹ rather than 'go through certain half-deserted streets' as in 'The Love Song',²⁴⁰ Hamm and Prufrock and Doctor Johnson recoil instead in horror. In the second of his *Four Quartets*, Eliot wrote the following:

I said to my soul, be still,
and let the dark come upon you

234. RICKS, *Beckett's Dying Words*, 16 n. 31.

235. 'through certain half-deserted streets [...] that follow like a tedious argument/ Of insidious intent/ To lead you to an overwhelming question' ('The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *CPP*, 3).

236. *Ibid.*, 7.

237. Michael EDWARDS, *Éloge de l'attente: T. S. Eliot et Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 1996), 15; my translation from the French.

238. *The Waste Land*, §1, 'The Burial of the Dead', *CPP*, 38.

239. *Four Quartets*, §II: iii, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 126.

240. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *CPP*, 3.

Which shall be the darkness of God.
 As in a theatre,
 The lights are extinguished,
 for the scene to be changed
 With a hollow rumble of wings,
 with a movement of darkness on darkness,
 And we know that the hills and the trees,
 the distant panorama
 And the bold imposing façade
 are all being rolled away—
 Or as, when an underground train, in the tube,
 stops too long between stations
 And the conversation rises and slowly
 fades into silence
 And you see behind every face
 the mental emptiness deepen
 Leaving only the growing terror
 of nothing to think about.²⁴¹

Hamm, Prufrock, and Doctor Johnson do not let the darkness come, let the bold façade be rolled away or roll ‘toward some overwhelming question’;²⁴² the growing terror of nothing, the mental emptiness and overwhelming silence, is too much—and is too little—for them to bear or rather to acknowledge bearing. Levinas turns to yet another Shakespearian character (in addition to the Hamlet explicitly evoked in Eliot’s ‘Prufrock’ and implicitly evoked in Beckett’s *Endgame*) in order to explain this fear and trembling before the overwhelming void: in this case the Scottish king Macbeth. He argued that Macbeth’s fear and trembling has to do precisely with the ‘being that returns in the heart of this negation’, with ‘the universality of existence even in its annihilation’—existence even in the annihilation of every existent.²⁴³ ‘It is the shadow of being that horrifies Macbeth’, or ‘the profile of being [that] takes form in nothingness’ like a hernia from the void—like the void’s herniation, its shadowed protrusion.

241. Op. cit., 126–127.

242. ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, *CPP*, 6.

243. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents* (trans. Alphonso Lingis, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1978, republished by Duquesne: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 61.

sion (the latter from Beckett in 1937,²⁴⁴ the former from Levinas in 1947).²⁴⁵ When all goes dark ('dark dark dark'),²⁴⁶ 'into the dark,/ The vacant [...] spaces',²⁴⁷ when 'The lights are extinguished' as 'in a theatre' between 'the scene[s]' and 'the distant panorama/ and the bold imposing façade are being rolled away'²⁴⁸—'roll[ed] toward some overwhelming question' as Prufrock says²⁴⁹—what remains is not, as in 'Prufrock' or *Endgame*, Mister Prufrock with a rolled-up pair of trousers²⁵⁰ or Monsieur Hamm with a blood-stained handkerchief,²⁵¹ but rather their utter absence. Again: 'The absence of everything returns as a presence, as the place where the bottom has dropped out of everything, an atmospheric density, a plenitude of the void, or the murmur of silence. There is, after this destruction of things and beings, the impersonal *field of forces* of existing' or impersonal intensity of the zero-body/body-without-organs;²⁵² 'that is why we treat the body-without-organs as the full egg before the extension of the organism and the organisation of the organs'²⁵³ write Deleuze and Guattari in the chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* that begins with a diagram of 'The Dogon Egg' and its 'Distribution of Intensities'.²⁵⁴

BEING CROSSED OUT—THE SHAH MAT OR CHECK MATE

The void ovoid qua body-without-organs is 'the milieu of pure intensity'²⁵⁵ from whence all our efforts are hatched or resolved and into which they eventually dissolve. 'You never reach the body-without-organs, you can't reach it,' explain Deleuze and Guattari, and

244. Beckett to Howe, 11-07-37, *Letters*, 521 n. 8.

245. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 61.

246. *Four Quartets*, §11: iii, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 126.

247. *Ibid.*

248. *Ibid.*

249. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *CPP*, 6.

250. *Ibid.*, 7.

251. *Endgame*, 1.

252. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 46–47.

253. DELEUZE & GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 153.

254. *Ibid.*

255. *Ibid.*, 164.

yet 'you are forever attaining it: it is a limit';²⁵⁶ 'you're already on it, scurrying like a vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic: a desert traveler and nomad of the steppes'.²⁵⁷ When, in '1947, Antonin Artaud declared war on the organs, *To be Done with the Judgement of God*', he revealed that this zero-body, this body-without-organs, could be discerned as a condition 'already underway the moment the body has had enough of the organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them'.²⁵⁸ Although 'you never reach the body-without-organs', it can nevertheless be discerned, if only dimly, whenever the organs exhaust themselves, the moment they reach their limit and the organised body accedes to their check-mate. In his treatise on *Existence and Existents* published in the same year (1947), Levinas suggested that the claim made by Henri Bergson 'that the concept of nothingness is equivalent to the idea of being crossed out' discerns, again if only dimly, this very same condition: the 'existential density of the void itself, [...] empty even of void', which he describes precisely as 'a content obtained through the negation of all content'.²⁵⁹

Imagine a chess-game wherein every circuit, every move, every play has been exhausted and the condition of check-mate is reached. At this point even the pieces—the organs of play—still remaining on the board have fully exhausted their function—the goal of a check-mate—and stand together as the signature or hieroglyph of the check-mate: the 'crossed out' king. The signature here is an x, a crossing out, which marks the end of the game, its ultimate elimination.²⁶⁰ The

256. Ibid., 150.

257. Ibid.

258. Ibid.

259. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 59–60.

260. In her autobiography *Billie Whitelaw ... Who He?* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1995, 141–142) Billie Whitelaw provides an excellent description of this with regard to Beckett's *Pas*: the play translated into English as *Footfalls*. While rehearsing *Footfalls* (putting an emphasis on the 'hearse' in 'rehearse'), Whitelaw 'realised' that the protagonist Amy or May 'seems to be in the process of disappearing like smoke, of becoming more and more inward, the movement getting ever slower, the body gently spiralling inward as the play proceeds—towards nothingness'. This 'realisation' comes at the end of a paragraph devoted to Beckett's 'incredibly detailed stage directions—with maps and diagrams showing exactly how one should walk, how many paces to take this way or that' (141): maps and diagrams outlining the movements as on a chess-board (detailing each move in a chess-game: how many [s]paces to take, this way or that; see *Murphy*, 243–244 for example).

entire chess-game, its whole circuit or series of short-circuits (its circuit of short-circuits), comes down to this culminating signature: this crossing-out is the signature of the complete and the completed game. If one were to name each and every chess-game, if indeed the signature is the event of nomination,²⁶¹ then the chess-game's culminating crossing-out—the hieroglyphic cartouche of its check-mate—would be this very name, albeit always signed with the x of the illiterate, the incorrect and incognito (i.e., without a proper word, proper resolution or proper conception). Indeed, as Jacques Derrida argued in his 'Signature, Event, Context', 'a written signature implies the actual or empirical non-presence of the signer' while it nevertheless 'retains [the latter's] having-been-present'.²⁶² It is in this sense a cartouche²⁶³ both in the sense of the revolver's regicidal cartridge (the 'cartouche' of the French soldier) and in the sense of a cryptic hieroglyph ('cartouche' being the way in which the French soldiers under Napoléon first described Egyptian hieroglyphs).²⁶⁴ Each chess-game check-mate, like the cartridge fired from a regicidal revolver, like the hieroglyphic signature of an expired king, marks the absence of precisely what it designates—this in the manner Levinas exemplified by way of Bergson's 'being crossed out'.²⁶⁵

Bergson's 'idea of being crossed out' suggests, according to Levinas, that Bergson himself must have had a vision of positive annihilation

261. '[A]n irreplaceable mark' that marks 'the singularity of the event': the 'absolutely singular event [of] an *absolutely* singular signature', of 'a title, always unique, [i.e.] a signature', as Jacques DERRIDA states in *Acts of Literature* (ed. Derek Attridge, London: Routledge Press, 1992), 295, 43, 319. With respect to this '*absolutely* singular signature', Derek Attridge notes that 'a reproduction of a signature is not a signature' (310).

262. See the indented quotation from Jacques DERRIDA's *Glas* (trans. John Leavey and Richard Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, 5) in the subsection entitled 'The Quincunx'—an indented quotation roughly ten pages hence, which begins with the statement 'When I sign I am already dead'. 'The signature remains, resides, and falls (to the tomb)', writes Derrida in the very same text; it 'remains [both] house and tomb. The text labors to give up the signature as lost. And reciprocally. Unending overlap (*recoupe*) of noun and verb, of the proper name and the common noun in the case of the cast-off' (5).

263. See DERRIDA, 'Cartouches', in *The Truth in Painting* (trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

264. See Gregory ULMER, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 19–20.

265. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 59–60.

wherein 'negation has a positive meaning'; 'he seems to catch sight of a situation analogous to that which led us to the notion of the "there is"'.²⁶⁶ It is a situation Levinas considers to be horrible—not because it involves a kind of assassination, an annihilation, which in chess would be the killing of the king, but because this assassination, annihilation, or in chess this king-killing, apocalyptically uncovers 'the universality of existence even in its annihilation': an existence 'that has "no exits"'.²⁶⁷ What Levinas finds horrible 'is, if we may say so, the impossibility of death': when an entity 'is stripped of [...] its power to have private existence' (to be an individual entity) 'its particularity *qua* entity [is turned] inside out' in what Levinas, with a nod to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl²⁶⁸ and Jean-Paul Sartre,²⁶⁹ calls 'a participation in the "there is" that returns in the heart of every negation, and that has "no exits"'.²⁷⁰ Bergson's 'idea of being crossed out' becomes that *x* which marks the spot (as in Macbeth) where the absence of an entire life, a lived *aïōn*, 'returns as a presence, as [...] the impersonal "field of forces" of existing'²⁷¹ there in the heart of every negation.

During Samuel Beckett's 'conversations in 1961 and 1962' with the American scholar Lawrence Harvey and in 1968 with the French poet Charles Juliet, this 'being crossed out' was instead called 'an assassinated being' (*un être assassiné*)²⁷² or the 'missing being' (a 'being missing': 'an *être manqué*').²⁷³ 'I have always had the feeling that there was within me an assassinated being, assassinated before my birth', said Beckett²⁷⁴—the 'unconquerable intuition [...] of a presence, embryonic, undeveloped, of a self that might have been but never got born: an *être manqué*'.²⁷⁵ 'It behooved me to find this assassinated being once again; try to give it life again.'²⁷⁶ Here his logoclastic 'on-

266. *Ibid.*, 59.

267. *Ibid.*, 56.

268. See the reference to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 55.

269. Sartre's *Huis Clos*, 'No Exit'.

270. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 56.

271. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 46–47.

272. JULIET, *Rencontre*, 14.

273. HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett*, 247.

274. *Op. cit.*, 14.

275. HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett*, 247.

276. *Op. cit.*, 14.

to-speleology' of the late 1930s is described as a quest for the 'existential density of the void itself, [...] empty even of void': that 'content obtained through the negation of all content'.²⁷⁷ And the being of the void—this 'being crossed out'—is described, moreover, in terms of an embryo: i.e., as an oval, ovoid, *ovum*.

BEING CHECK-MATED—MURPHY'S ENDON

No sooner does Beckett speak of such a being than his interlocutor Harvey hearkens back to Beckett's very first novel (*Murphy*) and its protagonist Murphy's chess-partner (whose name forecasts Beckett's future *Endgame*): namely the chess-playing 'madman' Mister Endon.²⁷⁸ It is explained in *Murphy* that Endon was the equivalent for Murphy of the Pythagorean Neary's 'tetrakyt': that is, the emblem of 'his perfect love'.²⁷⁹ 'It seemed to Murphy that he was bound to Mister Endon [...] by a love of the purest possible kind, exempt from the big world's precocious ejaculations of thought, word and deed'.²⁸⁰ Mister Endon 'passed his days' in 'languor'²⁸¹ save for his 'one frivolity':²⁸² his one true love (Mister *Endon's* 'tetrakyt'), the game of chess—a game of chess with the supposedly more sane, proper, and properly [in]formed Murphy.²⁸³ As described in detail on pages 243–245 of *Murphy*, endgames with Endon end with a check-mated Murphy, with the check-mating of the one whose name is homophonous with the Greek word for form, for any formation. Murphy would gaze 'for a long time at the board before laying his Shah on his side, and again for a long time after that act of submission. But little by little his eyes were captured by the brilliant swallow-tail of Mister Endon's arms and legs, [...] till they saw nothing else, and that in a short time only as a vivid blur, Neary's big blooming buzzing confusion or ground, mercifully free of figure'.²⁸⁴ All figures, all forms, all *morphē*—that of Mister

277. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 59–60.

278. HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett*, 248.

279. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 558.

280. *Murphy*, 184.

281. *Ibid.*, 186.

282. *Ibid.*, 187.

283. *Ibid.*, 187.

284. *Ibid.*, 245.

Endon and of Murphy (*morphē*) included—would dissolve into a ‘big blooming buzzing confusion or ground’ at the tail-end of check-mate. Murphy would then drop onto his side like his check-mated Shah (his *shah-mat*), scattering any remaining chess-pieces with a terrible noise;²⁸⁵ in this condition the ‘big blooming’ blur ‘persisted for a little’ and then ‘this also faded’:

Then this also faded and Murphy began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare postnatal treat, being the absence (to abuse a nice distinction) not of *percipere* but of *percipi*. His other senses also found themselves at peace, an unexpected pleasure. Not the numb peace of their own suspension, but the positive peace that comes when the somethings give way, or perhaps simply add up, to the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real. Time did not cease, that would be asking too much, but the wheel of rounds and pauses did, as Murphy with his head among the armies continued to suck in, through all the posterns of his withered soul, the accidentless One-and-Only, conveniently called Nothing.²⁸⁶

In the absence of that which is perceived (*percipi*) what is perceived (*percipere*) is the ‘Nothing’ with respect to which Democritus the Abderite said ‘naught is more real’. As Friedrich Nietzsche states in his lectures on *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, Democritus’s ‘contemporary, Glaucus of Rhegium, is said to have maintained that Democritus was taught by a Pythagorean’;²⁸⁷ indeed Nietzsche suggests that ‘Democritus must have studied under [the Pythagorean] Empedocles’, ‘who emulated Pythagoras in dignity of life and being’, and who must be contextualised within the tradition of ‘Pythagorean-Orphic mysticism’ (‘Empedocles [...] hovers between Pythagoras and Democritus’ in Nietzsche’s account).²⁸⁸ Where ‘Empedocles had presented four elements’—earth, water, air and fire—‘Democritus

285. Ibid., 246.

286. Ibid.

287. NIETZSCHE, *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 122.

288. Ibid., 121, 108, 113, 119.

worked to characterise them in terms of his homogeneous atoms' which 'surge' and 'cross' and 'fold' and 'clod' in the context of the void.²⁸⁹ The 'void' or 'nothing' (Murphy's capital-N 'Nothing') is Democritus's mystical 'Pythagorean-Orphic' idea from whence all 'entanglement[s]'²⁹⁰ and 'schemata'²⁹¹ derive, or again: surge, cross, fold, and clod; it is his metaphysico-mathematical zero, as Malfatti would say. The void is the egg *from which* and *in which*—in *contradistinction* to which—every thing is hatched, and although it is not an existent thing, its existence in contradistinction to existents is a fundamental Democritean premise.

The fact that Murphy perceives this 'Nothing' by way of being check-mated, in the final 'being crossed out' of a chess-game, highlights the *heuristique heureuse*, the happy heuristic, that chess-games present with regard to approaching the question of positive annihilation. After all, the game of chess, or *jeu d'échecs* in French, is (as I have previously stated) entirely geared toward and focused on the event of an *échec*—i.e., a failure, a defeat, an undoing, indeed a murder: the murder (in Persian, the *mat* or *mata*) of the king (in Persian, the *shah* or [*k*]sayathiya). Its entire framework, *shatrang* or *chaturanga* (respectively the Persian and the Sanskrit words for the four-part or the four-fold)²⁹² frames an utter annihilation, an ultimate assassination. The focus within this framework and the focal point of the entire enterprise is the *shah mat* ('check mate' in English): the king that gets crossed out. The whole endeavour has at its heart, from start to finish, this 'being crossed out'. And just as the chess-game's frame—the *chaturanga* (four-part) of the chess-board—reflects the four-part that the Greek *tetractys* signifies,²⁹³ so too is there a 'being crossed out' at the heart of the *tetractys*. Indeed, the importance of this 'being crossed out' was noted by Malfatti in the study introduced by Gilles Deleuze.

289. Ibid., 125, 127, 124.

290. Ibid., 127.

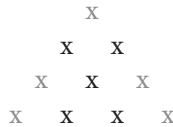
291. Ibid., 124.

292. DAVIDSON, *A Short History of Chess*, 22.

293. The word *tetractys* itself designates a 'four-part'.

THE QUINCUNX—L'ESSENCE DE L'ÉCHEC

Echoing a point made by René Descartes's younger contemporary Sir Thomas Browne of England in the latter's treatise on *The Quincunxiall Lozenge*,²⁹⁴ Malfatti noted that the number at the heart of the tetractys, the 'number 5, wherein the beginning and the end of the *décade* conjoin', is expressed within the 'arithmetic and geometry' of the *dekad* or *tetractys* (his *mathesis*)²⁹⁵ as a *quincunx*,²⁹⁶ indeed as the quincunxial convergence of two fives, an upper one and a lower one. In the words of Frank Livingstone Huntley, 'The addition of two fives is ten, or the Roman x, the perfect number, made of two fives—Roman vs—joined at their apices';²⁹⁷ this configuration, which, to reiterate, is called the quincunx, lies at the core or center of the Pythagorean *tetractys*, where x again marks the spot.²⁹⁸



Beckett's *Quad*, a 'ballet for four people' produced as *Quadrat*

294. Thomas BROWNE, *The Garden of Cyrus or The Quincunxiall Lozenge: On the Network Plantations of the Ancients, Naturally, Artificially, and Mystically Considered*, republished as *Hydriotaphia (Urn Burial) and the Garden of Cyrus* (ed. Frank Livingstone Huntley, New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1966).

295. Malfatti, 59.

296. Put simply, 'the quincunx [is] an arrangement of five objects set so that four are at the corners of a square or rectangle and the other at its centre' (Peter MURPHY, 'The Narrative of Allegory in *The Lost Ones*, or the Quincunx Realistically Considered' in his *Reconstructing Beckett: Language for Being in Samuel Beckett's Fiction*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 99).

297. Frank Livingstone HUNTLEY, 'Introduction' to Thomas Browne, *Hydriotaphia (Urn Burial) and the Garden of Cyrus* (ed. Frank Huntley, New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1966), x.

298. (As Lady Macbeth might have said). See William SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*, Act v, Scene i, lines 31, 35–40: 'Yet here's a spot,' states Lady Macbeth. 'Out, damned spot! Out, I say!—One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky!—Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?'

1 + 2 in 1981 by Süddeutscher Rundfunk²⁹⁹ and based on an earlier version for 'two players' written in 1963,³⁰⁰ traces precisely such a *quincunx*,³⁰¹

X X
 X
 X X

labelling the four corners of the quad as A, B, C and D in the stage directions, with the fifth point, E—the very center of the quincunx and by extension the entire *tetractys*—described by Beckett as a 'supposed [...] danger zone'.³⁰² The fifth point, E, is in the play a void: it is an empty space, an empty place, avoided in the perambulations of the play's personæ. The perambulations of the play's personæ are each and every one a 'deviation' from this 'danger zone' or inner void.³⁰³ The plot or 'problem' of the play is precisely the 'negotiation' of this problematic point, this inner void or danger zone, in the course of solo and multiple movements: the play's perambulations.³⁰⁴

I take *Quad* to be the clearest crystallisation of the Beckettian *mathesis*—of the *mathesis* that is the Beckettian *poesis*, the principle at work in all his works: the universal *mathesis*, or *mathesis universalis*, of the entire Beckettian *œuvre*. And I take this quadratic structure, or rather *quincunx* (*The Quincunxiall Lozenge* of Thomas Browne and Brownian motion), to be the clearest crystallisation and reduction of what in Sanskrit is called the *chaturanga*, in Persian the *shatrang*, in French the *jeu d'échecs* and in English the *game of chess*, the very 'game of chess'³⁰⁵ which centers on an essential or quintessential quincunxial *échec*: again, the check-mate or *shah mat*. Every chess-game is, as I have said, geared toward and centered on this quincunxial crossing: the crossing-out of the king (the *shah mat* or

299. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 472.

300. *Ibid.*, 283.

301. *Quad*, in *Collected Shorter Plays*, 290–294.

302. *Ibid.*, 293.

303. *Ibid.*

304. *Ibid.*

305. The 'game of chess' to which both *The Waste Land*'s second section and the entirety of *Endgame* explicitly refer—see *The Waste Land*, §11, 'A Game of Chess', *CPP*, 39–42, and *Endgame*.

check-mate). The chess-game's quincunx is the crossing that marks what Levinas, after Bergson, called a 'being crossed out'—the *être assassiné* or *être manqué* according to Samuel Beckett. The chess-player, like the Beckettian logoclast, endeavours in this game of calculative combinatorial elimination to trace in its annihilation 'the hieroglyphics' of an 'inspired perception':³⁰⁶ that of this 'being crossed out'; but this 'being crossed out' is a being that even on the chess-board 'never got born'³⁰⁷—or more to the point, a being 'born' via assassination, *assassinascence*.³⁰⁸

The fatal aspect, the very terminus and termination of the chess-game, is its natal aspect: a condition subtly suggested in the advice given by Beckett during the staging of his short novella *Company*³⁰⁹—namely that 'special attention' should be paid 'to words like *terminé* (concluded), for the accent on the last syllable is also heard in *né* (born)'³¹⁰—a Beckettian echo of the Heraclitean fragment that plays on the Greek *bios*, which means 'life' when accent is placed on its first syllable and 'the bow' or the instrument of death (*ergon de thanatos*) when accent is placed on the last.³¹¹ 'I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth into death', Malone straightforwardly states in the novel *Malone Dies*.³¹²

The signatory x of the *shah mat* is the signature of the *shah*, the king, that is *mat*, that is dead. Like the so-called alchemical or homeopathic 'signature' (which is the trace left behind after a substance has been diluted beyond any trace of itself),³¹³ this signature is but the

306. KNOWLSON & PILLING, *Frescoes of the Skull*, xiii.

307. HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett*, 247.

308. JULIET, *Rencontre*, 14.

309. *Nohow On*, 1–46.

310. Samuel BECKETT, quoted via Enoch Brater in RICKS, *Beckett's Dying Words*, 40.

311. HERACLITUS, Fragment 48 (Kahn, 65 §LXXIX).

312. Samuel BECKETT, *Malone Dies*, in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 283.

313. The Paracelsian physician Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann suggested in his 1796 *Versuch über ein neues Prinzip zur Auffindung der Heilkräfte der Arzneisubstanzen, nebst einigen Blicken auf die Bisherigen* (his *Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Powers of Drugs*) that active, activated, or 'succussed' dilutions exponentially increase the homeopathic (i.e., curative) 'force' of substances, and that the greatest homeopathic force is reached precisely at the point when the succussed dilution no longer contains any trace of the diluted matter; this is the point of both

presence of an absence, 'the place where the bottom has dropped out of everything,' in the words of Levinas; the signatory x marks only an 'impersonal *field of forces*', there where there *was* a *personam* but where there *is* but the latter's elimination. At the heart of its cross or quincunx is the subtracted *shah*, or in *Murphy* the 'Shah [knocked] on his side',³¹⁴ a king no longer, a king knocked down. What Levinas called 'the murmur of silence'³¹⁵ at the heart of this 'being crossed out'³¹⁶ is thus naught but a death knell: in French, a *glas*; and in his book by that title (*Glas*) Derrida offered another apt description of this signatory condition.³¹⁷ As soon as I sign my signature, he suggests, I *sign off*, I *write myself off*, I am *written off*, or more to the point, I am *offed*:

When I sign I am already dead. I hardly have the time to sign than I am already dead, that I am already dead. I have to abridge the writing, hence the siglum, because the structure of the signature event carries my death in that event. For which it is not an "event" and perhaps signifies nothing, writes out of a past that has never been present and out of a death that has never been alive.³¹⁸

The signature here is a death-sentence: it is terminal—a terminus, a termination. But special attention should be paid to such termina-

greatest or maximal dilution and force. At the point of total dilution all that remains of a substance is its force or energy 'signature.'

314. *Murphy*, 245.

315. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 46.

316. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 59.

317. In an interview with Derek Attridge, Derrida admitted that he was altogether Beckettian in inclination, and that Beckett's work was thus a 'danger zone' of sorts for him—something, he said, that 'I will thus have "avoided" as though I had always already read [it] and understood [it] too well' (*Acts*, 61). At the center of this work that he admittedly 'avoided' for reasons of its being too familiar, all too close to his own de-constructions, there is 'a certain nihilism'—indeed a 'nihilism [that] is both interior to' Beckett's work 'and then, already, beyond [it]. With Beckett in particular, the two possibilities are in the greatest proximity and competition. He is a nihilist and he is not a nihilist. [...] That's what "remains" finally the most "interesting," that's the work, that's the signature, this remainder which remains when the thematics is exhausted' (61).

318. Jacques DERRIDA, *Glas* (trans. John Leavey and Richard Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 19.

tion, for as Beckett himself said, in the end the *terminé* is far from dead: the *terminé* is at its very end *né*.³¹⁹ What is born (*né*) or borne in termination is beyond the pale of personhood: 'it is anonymous', as Levinas says. 'It is as impersonal as the "it" in "it is raining" or "it is hot"'.³²⁰ It does not follow any supposedly or supportively personal logic but hearkens back to the logic and *logos* described in the fragments of Heraclitus,³²¹ in which *logos* is not the wor[l]dly logic³²² grasped or graspable by individual personæ.³²³ 'Although this *logos* is shared'—indeed 'all things come to pass in accordance with this *logos*'³²⁴—the vast majority play life's game as though it was 'a private possession':³²⁵ this according to Heraclitus's second fragment, which along with his sixtieth one forms the epigraph to Eliot's *Four Quartets*.³²⁶ 'Although all things come to pass in accordance with this *logos*'³²⁷ and it is 'that with which [individuals] constantly associate',³²⁸

319. BECKETT, quoted via Enoch Brater in RICKS, *Beckett's Dying Words*, 40.

320. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 47. Christopher Ricks points to a similar statement in Beckett: the statement in his 'Six Poèmes 1947–1949' which states that 'I would like my love to die/ and the rain to be raining on the graveyard' (Samuel BECKETT, *Collected Poems in English and French*, London: John Calder, 1977, 63). 'The tautology "rain rains" seeps deep', writes Ricks (*Beckett's Dying Words*, 22). He notes that 'When Jack MacGowran gave a BBC reading of the poems in 1966, he was privileged with changes by Beckett at the studio rehearsals, including the change from 'and the rain to be falling on the graveyard' to 'and the rain to be raining on the graveyard'. The earlier reading had not yet arrived at such *entropic tautology*', according to Beckett (23).

321. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 49.

322. The world of words, nameable objects, and subjects.

323. Heraclitus's word for the 'grasping' appropriate to the *logos alogos* is the word *syllapsis* (see Fragment 10 and its translation in Kahn, 85 §CXXIV); it is something like a *taking-hold* by *letting-go* or equally counterintuitive *approach-by-way-of-withdrawal* and is likened in the present study to that *Abgeschiedenheit* and/or *Gelassenheit* of Meister Eckhart which Martin Heidegger uses as his translation of Heraclitus's most problematic fragment: the one-word Fragment 122 (*agchibasien*). The *Suda* likens the latter (*agchibasien*) to the back-and-forth, to-and-fro, come-and-go of one engaged in battle (see <http://www.stoa.org> [398], and Martin HEIDEGGER, *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit*, trans. John Anderson and Hans Freund, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).

324. HERACLITUS, Fragment 1 (Kahn, 29 §III).

325. HERACLITUS, Fragment 2 (Kahn, 29 §III).

326. *Four Quartets*, epigraphs, CPP, 117.

327. HERACLITUS, Fragment 1 (Kahn, 29 §I).

328. HERACLITUS, Fragment 72 (Kahn, 31 §V).

individuals tend to be 'at odds with it'³²⁹—perhaps because its 'nature loves to hide' under masks (in Greek, *prosōpa*; in Latin, *personae*).³³⁰ Unlike the Platonic and Post-Platonic *logos* which loves to reveal itself in representations, Heraclitus's pre-Platonic *logos* loves to hide, indeed encrypt itself (*kruptesthai philei*), remaining hidden rather than revealed by representations, each representation being a 'deviation' from it, as in Beckett's *Quad*.³³¹ Heraclitus's cryptic *logos* is the *logos* that avoids private possession and expression³³² and is moreover the avoided *logos*—in sum, the *logos* of the void. Being attuned to, rather than estranged from, this *logos* amounts to being attuned to, rather than estranged from, the void.

THE LOGOS ALOGOS—UNWORTS

But how is it possible to be 'attuned' to a *logos* that is *alogos*—i.e., *silent*, *sourd*, a *surd*? How is possible to be 'attuned' to a void in which there is no sound (or in which the only sound is 'the murmur of silence')? Two interrelated answers come to mind, the first from Beckett's 'Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit' published in the December 1949 issue of *Transitions* and republished in *Disjecta*.

As in his 1930 publication *Proust*, to which the publisher John Calder appended the 'Three Dialogues' for its 1965 republication, this text reveals as much about its author (Samuel Beckett, who 'reworked and published [them] at Duthuit's insistence'—Duthuit's 'insistence [being] that Beckett make his views better known')³³³ as it does about its intended subject (the writer Marcel Proust on the one hand, the painters Bram van Velde, Tal Coat and André Masson on the other). The gnome with which Beckett begins the second dialogue, about 'the disquiet of him who lacks an adversary', inspires Georges Duthuit to speak about the 'fear and trembling' of 'painting the void', of even

329. Ibid.

330. HERACLITUS, Fragment 123 (Kahn, 33 §X). 'All that is deep loves masks' wrote Nietzsche in the unpublished *Nachlass*, VI:2, 53.

331. *Quad*, 293.

332. HERACLITUS, Fragment 2 (Kahn, 29 §III).

333. ACKERLEY & GONTARSKI, *Grove Companion*, 577.

thinking or speaking about it³³⁴—a ‘fear and trembling’ that finds its forerunner in Beckett’s discussion of the ‘Pythagorean terror’ of the irrational and the irrationality of his own particular project years earlier (his logoclassm, literature of the unword, or onto-speleology).³³⁵ With reference to the latter,³³⁶ Beckett suggests that his is a project ‘on a quite different plane’³³⁷ from ‘the plane of the feasible.’³³⁸—‘What other plane can there be for the maker?’ asks Duthuit in amazement. To which Beckett responds: ‘Logically none. Yet I speak of an art turning from it in disgust,’³³⁹ turning from the logical to the illogical, from the rational to the irrational, from the feasible or possible to the im-passe of the impossible—proceeding, as Beckett’s Unnamable would later say, ‘by aporia pure and simple.’³⁴⁰ He concludes with the statement that ‘to be an artist is to fail as no other dare fail’ and that rather than ‘shrink from it’ (this failure) the artist should submit to it and ‘make of this submission, this admission, this fidelity to failure, a new occasion, a new term of relation, [...] even if only of itself, of its impossibility.’³⁴¹ The artist should make of his very incapability (his incapacity, his inability) what Beckett’s friend and one-time therapist Wilfred Bion, after the poet John Keats, called a *negative capability*. Positive incapacity, in other words, should be understood artistically as *negative capability*.

The first of the two initial answers that come to mind in response to the question of how ‘attunement’ to a void in which there is no sound might possibly happen is the answer Beckett provides in his ‘Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit’: that is, by way of the impossible, by admitting and submitting to the impossible—thereby allowing it and also thereby falling under (*submitting to* rather than *shrinking from*) its logos alogos.³⁴² The impossibility of any attune-

334. ‘That is perhaps why he speaks [...] “in fear and trembling” [...] of painting the void’ (Georges DUTHUIT, quoted in ‘Three Dialogues’, *Disjecta*, 139).

335. ‘Three Dialogues’, *Disjecta*, 145.

336. Beckett’s logoclassm, literature of the unword, or onto-speleology.

337. *Ibid.*, 138.

338. *Ibid.*, 139.

339. *Ibid.*

340. *The Unnamable*, 291.

341. *Op. cit.*, 145.

342. The ‘act of submission’ in *Murphy* (‘Murphy gazed for a long time at the board before laying his Shah on his side, and again for a long time after that act of submis-

ment to the void is itself, as such, an attunement, 'a new occasion, a new term of relation'³⁴³ to the void. What's more it is a very intense relation, a relation fraught with tensions, since the turn away from the plane of the 'familiar' and the 'feasible'³⁴⁴ is a turn from upright, even, straightforward relations to relations that are (with respect to these) crooked, oblique and aslant—the relation of the diagonal to the sides of a square for example, which cuts across what Beckett in *Quad* calls the 'danger zone'³⁴⁵ and forms what Pythagoras called the hypotenuse.³⁴⁶

The second of the two initial answers that come to mind in response to the question of how 'attunement' to a void in which there is no sound might possibly happen is drawn from the three previously-mentioned letters that Beckett had penned in the month of July, 1937. To recap, in his letter of 03-07-37 to Joseph Hone, Beckett wrote approvingly of Samuel Johnson's 'notion of positive annihilation'³⁴⁷ and in his subsequent letter of 09-07-37 to Axel Kaun of the need to 'tear apart' formal language, the 'veil' of its 'grammar and style',³⁴⁸ 'in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying behind' its 'mask': 'the mask, *eine Larve*,³⁴⁹ of 'language';³⁵⁰ he suggested that the 'word surface' should 'be dissolved, as for example the sound surface of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* is devoured by huge black pauses, so that for pages on end we cannot perceive it as other than a dizzying path of sounds connecting unfathomable chasms of silence';³⁵¹ finally, the dissolution of the 'word surface'—which he

sion. But little by little his eyes were captured [...] till they saw nothing else, and that in a short time only as a vivid blur, Neary's big blooming buzzing confusion or ground, mercifully free of figure' (*Murphy*, 245).

343. Op. cit., 145.

344. That is, the turn away from the plane of the 'familiar' and the 'feasible' toward that of the unfamiliar, unnameable, universal *mathesis* (the *mathesis universalis* that is infinite, inconsistent, intractable, and yet that terrifying *tractus* characterised by Heraclitus in a manner akin to the *dao* of Kong Fuzi and Laozi).

345. *Quad*, 293.

346. Hypotenuse: from the Greek *hypo* (fundamental, underlying) *tonos* (torsion, tension).

347. Beckett to Hone, 03-07-37, *Letters*, 509.

348. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 518.

349. Ibid., 514.

350. Ibid., 518.

351. Ibid., 518–519.

likened to the dissolution of the 'sound surface' effected by Giovanni Malfatti's most famous client, Ludwig Beethoven³⁵²—is in his 11-07-37 letter to Mary Manning Howe³⁵³ given the title of *logoclastm* or 'ruptured writing': the 'literature of the unword'³⁵⁴ or 'literature of the non-word'³⁵⁵—*Literatur des Unworts*³⁵⁶—again. These letters suggest another answer to the question of being attuned to the void: namely our being at base (fundamentally) this tune, this tone—albeit with unfortunate overtones. It is in the undertone, the undertonality of our very being—the sound of the chasm at the core of our being, the 'dizzying path of sounds' connecting our 'unfathomable chasms of silence'³⁵⁷—that Beckett's interest lies. Twenty years after these three letters from 1937, in one of the letters he wrote in 1957 to the director Alan Schneider (the first director in America of *Endgame*), Beckett stated point-blank that his work 'is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin.'³⁵⁸

KEY CONCEPTS—CHESS-BOARD, CHESS-PIECES
AND CHESS-GAME

We are left with certain key Beckettian and Eliotic concepts, and more fundamental still, certain key Heraclitean and Pythagorean notions. The Pythagorean *mathesis*, or *tetractys*, is one of them: the *dekad* 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 which Giovanni Malfatti figures in the form of an egg. Each number configured within the *tetractys* is a hatched

352. Giovanni Malfatti di Montereaggio's profession was that of a physician, and perhaps his most famous client was Ludwig van Beethoven, who dedicated his *Cantata in B-flat Major* to Malfatti.

353. It is to the novelist and playwright Mary Manning Howe, the long-time (indeed childhood) friend of Beckett who 'loved to produce and destroy meanings in the same sentence', that Beckett playfully wrote of 'starting a Logoclasts's League' devoted to a 'ruptured writing' that would let 'the void protrude' (previously quoted).

354. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 173.

355. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 520.

356. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 54 and *Letters*, 515.

357. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 518–519.

358. Beckett to Schneider, *Disjecta*, 109.

or hatched concrescence, a kind of cut-out *calx*—hence the word ‘calculation’ which derives from these distinguished *calx* or Pythagorean *psēphoi* (counting-stones). The Pythagorean counting-stones, the *psēphoi* or *calx*, are merely chess-pieces in the calculative game: a game (like chess) which always calculates in various different ways the very same ‘something or nothing’: the void ovoid of the *dekad* as such, the *mathesis* of the *tetractys*. Thus far we have two key Pythagorean terms: the *calx* or *psēphoi* (the playing pieces) and the *mathesis* or *tetractys* (the chessboard matrix). The third term from Pythagoras is the *hypotonos*, sometimes also called the *hypotropos*: the line that stretches across the center of the *quincunx* and cleaves the quad, cuts it into two triangles conjoined there at the hypotenuse. In what I take to be the cornerstone of Beckett’s *œuvre* and his veritable masterwork, his novel *The Unnamable*, the Unnamable non-character/narrator (its Tiresias or Lazarus in the context of ‘T. Eliot’)³⁵⁹ hypothesises that it is a hypotenuse of sorts, a kind of *hypotonos* or *hypotropos*: ‘perhaps that’s what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, [...] as thin as foil’, it hypothesises. ‘I’m neither one side nor the other, I’m in the middle, I’m the partition, I’ve two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that’s what I feel, myself vibrating, I’m the tympanum.’³⁶⁰ Three Pythagorean principles are thus in play: the playing pieces (the *calx* or *psēphoi*), the playing field (the *mathesis* or *tetractys*), and that which plays, that which pushes the playing pieces back and forth across the playing field as well as puts them on the field and pulls them off of it (the *hypotonos* or *hypotropos*).

These three Pythagorean principles have Heraclitean equivalents: the Pythagorean *psēphoi* are akin to *pesseia* in the fragments of Heraclitus; the Pythagorean *tetractys* is akin to the *logos* and the Pythagorean *hypotonos* is instead *palintonos* in the fragments. *Aiōn pais esti paizōn pesseuōn; paidos he basilēiē*: life, a life-span, a ‘life-time is a child at play, moving pieces in a game; kingship belongs to this child’, explains Heraclitus.³⁶¹ Life in a sense is the ‘*Dreifachen Weltlebens*’ or ‘Threefold Life-World’³⁶² (playing-pieces, playing-field, and that

359. Beckett to MacGreevy, 09-01-37, *Letters*, 421.

360. *The Unnamable*, 383.

361. HERACLITUS, Fragment 52 (Kahn, 71 §XCIV).

362. See MALFATTI, *Studien über Anarchie und Hierarchie des Wissens, mit besonderer Beziehung auf die Medizin*, §1: ‘Die Mathesis als Hieroglyphe und Symbolik

which plays) of a *jeu d'échecs*, a chess-game—its entire span in this respect configured as the quad of a chess-board, the *tetractys's quin-cunx*. In this metaphysico-mathematical matrix, figures are moved hither and thither, each figure (*pesseuon*, plural *pesseia*) part of the great[er] calculation: a calculation that would express the *tetractys* as such: the metaphysico-mathematical matrix—*mathesis*—Heraclitus here calls the *aiōn*. The child itself, the game-player, though 'not indeed a *character*,'³⁶³ not in fact a *pesseuon*, is nevertheless the heart, soul, and 'sovereign' of and in the entire matrix, of and in the whole *mathesis*.³⁶⁴ The true sovereign and veritable king of any chess-game is the one that is the focus and focal point (the *point*, in short) of the game itself: the one that undergoes in the *fin de partie* or endgame *l'échec du jeu d'échecs*: the chess-game's ultimate check-mate. The true sovereign and veritable king of any chess-game is the one that loses its *pesseia*, and even at the point when it has but one *pesseuon*—but one figure—left to play ('Exit Clov. Pause. [Hamm:] 'Me to play', we read nearing the end of Beckett's *Endgame*),³⁶⁵ finds that it must sacrifice the latter as well.

H A M M (as before):

That's right.

(Exit Clov. Pause.)

Me to play.

(He takes out his handkerchief, unfolds it,
holds it spread out before him.)

We're getting on.

(Pause.)

You weep, and weep, for nothing, so as not to
laugh, and little by little ... you begin to grieve.

(He folds the handkerchief, puts it back
in his pocket, raises his head.)

des Dreifachen Weltlebens oder das Mystische Organon der alten Hindus' (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1845): *Studies on the Anarchy and Hierarchy of Knowledge*, §1: 'The *Mathesis* as Hieroglyph and Symbolism of the Universe's Threefold Life, or the Mystical Organon of the Ancient Hindus'.

363. *The Waste Land*, note 218, CPP, 52.

364. A *shah mat*[hesis].

365. *Endgame*, 2.

All those I might have helped.

(Pause.)

Helped!

(Pause.)

Saved.

(Pause.)

Saved!

(Pause.)

The place was crawling with them.

(Pause. Violently.)

Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're
on earth, there's no cure for that!

(Pause.)

Get out of here and love one another!

Lick your neighbour as yourself!

(Pause. Calmer.)

[...] The end is in the beginning and yet you go on.

(Pause.)

Perhaps I could go on with my story, end it and begin
another.

(Pause.)

Perhaps I could throw myself out on the floor.

*(He pushes himself painfully off his seat, falls back
again.)*

Dig my nails into the cracks and drag myself forward
with my fingers.

(Pause.)

It will be the end and there I'll be, wondering what can
have brought it on and wondering what can have ...

(he hesitates)

... why it was so long coming.

(Pause.)

There I'll be, in the old shelter, alone
against the silence and ...

(he hesitates)

... the stillness. If I can hold my peace, and sit quiet, it
will be all over with sound, and motion, all over
and done with.

(Pause.)

[...] Moment upon moment, pattering down, like the
millet grains of ...

(he hesitates)

... that old Greek,
and all life long you wait
for that to mount up to a life.

(Pause. He opens his mouth to continue, renounces.)

Ah let's get it over!³⁶⁶

Reduced to speaking of and with himself, the kingly Hamm reflects on all those *pesseia*, all those players, he 'might have helped' and 'saved'—'Helped!' he scoffs. 'Saved!' he scoffs again. 'Lick your neighbour as yourself!' he finally proclaims, bringing the words of *Matthew* 19:19 in line with the sense of the verb 'lick' that was 'first attested in 1535'³⁶⁷ and used with reference to the idea of 'defeat[ing]' or 'annihilat[ing] an enemy's forces'³⁶⁸—in this case, however, turned toward the self ('yourself') as well as the other ('your neighbour'). To 'love your neighbour as yourself' amounts to dissolving ('defeat[ing]' or 'annihilat[ing]') both these masks: the mask (*eine Larve*)³⁶⁹ of the *self* and the mask (*eine Larve*)³⁷⁰ of the *other*—not in the spirit of hate or hostility but again in the spirit of love, in the spirit 'of positive annihilation'.³⁷¹ There where all things end, where everything is negated, annihilated, is where all things begin: the natal and the fatal are enfolded in the end, from the beginning. 'The end is in the beginning' Hamm proclaims: they are in a condition of co-existence. This echoes a passage from the fifth part and quincunxial 'danger zone'³⁷² of Eliot's first *Quartet*, 'Burnt Norton', where Eliot writes about 'the co-existence,/ Or say that the end precedes the beginning,/ And the end and the beginning were always there/ Before the beginning and after the end.'³⁷³ 'In my beginning is my end' he writes in the first

366. Ibid., 68–70.

367. www.etymonline.com, *vide* 'lick'.

368. Ibid.

369. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 514.

370. Ibid.

371. Beckett to Hone, 03-07-37, *Letters*, 509.

372. *Quad*, 293.

373. *Four Quartets*, §1: v, 'Burnt Norton', *CPP*, 121.

line and the last line of the poem (*East Coker*) as opposed to the play (*Endgame*) toward which Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* points us, according to Michael Edwards.³⁷⁴ '*Waiting for Godot* points us toward the second *Quartet*, and the latter points us in turn toward Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*', the titular 'ashes' of which are precisely what the 'madman who thought the end of the world had come' in Beckett's *Endgame* sees,³⁷⁵ according to Edwards.³⁷⁶ This mad vision, this fusion of the end and the beginning—this from the very beginning and in the very endgame—is the vision disclosed at the close of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, in its fifth and final section, the *quincunx* of what Edwards in his study calls Eliot's *Quator quatre* (the fourth *Quartet*):

What we call the beginning is often the end
 And to make an end is to make a beginning.
 The end is where we start from. [...]
 Every phrase and every sentence is an end
 and a beginning,
 Every poem an epitaph. And any action
 Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the
 sea's throat
 Or to an illegible stone: and that is where
 we start.
 We die with the dying:
 See, they depart, and we go with them.
 We are born with the dead:
 See, they return, and bring us with them.
 The moment of the rose and the moment
 of the yew-tree
 Are of equal duration. [...]
 A condition of complete simplicity
 (Costing not less than everything)

374. *Four Quartets*, §11: i, §11: v, 'East Coker', *CPP* 123, 129.

375. '[A] madman who thought the end of the world had come,' Hamm explains in *Endgame*. 'He was a painter—and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! (*Pause*.) He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes.' *Endgame*, 44.

376. EDWARDS, *Éloge de L'attente*, 15; my translation from the French.

And all shall be well and
 All manner of thing shall be well
 When the tongues of flames are in-folded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one.³⁷⁷

INCALCULABLE FEAR—THE WASTE LAND'S HANDFUL OF DUST

For Hamm, in *Endgame*, such in-folding is very perturbing indeed—‘a kind of Pythagorean terror, as though the irrationality of *pi* were an offense against the deity, not to mention his creature’, as Beckett says in his ‘Three Dialogues’.³⁷⁸ ‘Hamm (*very perturbed*): ‘But humanity might start from there all over again!’³⁷⁹ Hamm hesitates ‘to end’ from the very beginning because of this perturbing premonition. In his first soliloquy at the outset of *Endgame* he states that ‘it’s time it ended, in the shelter, too. (*Pause.*) And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to ... to end. Yes, there it is, it’s time it ended and yet I hesitate to—(*He yawns.*)—to end. (*Yawns.*)’³⁸⁰ In ‘the dark,/ The vacant [...] space’³⁸¹ of the yawns (the yawning chasms) that punctuate his hesitation like those ‘huge black pauses [...] of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony’ to which Beckett refers in his letter to Axel Kaun,³⁸² the whole condition of his being is displayed, the void ovoid of his beginning, his end, and everything in between. It is as if in *Endgame* Hamm’s words weave a ‘path [of sounds]’ (a ‘path [of sounds] connecting [those] unfathomable chasms of silence’³⁸³ that constitute the ‘enormous pauses’³⁸⁴ of his ‘yawns’) from the very lines of Eliot’s second *Quartet* that Michael Edwards directly links to Beckett’s previous play *Waiting for Godot*—weaves them into soliloquies or monologues the ‘unfathomable’ *sub-text* or *non-text* (*unwords*) of which he nevertheless hesitates³⁸⁵ to

377. Cf. YATES, *Giordano Bruno*, 296–297.

378. ‘Three Dialogues’, *Disjecta*, 145.

379. *Endgame*, 33.

380. *Ibid.*, 3.

381. *Four Quartets*, §11: iii, ‘East Coker’, *CPP*, 126.

382. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Letters*, 518–519.

383. *Ibid.*, 519.

384. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta* 172.

385. Very much like J. Alfred Prufrock in his ‘Love Song’.

follow. Hamm echoes yet nevertheless hesitates to follow the suggestion[s] of those lines from Eliot's second *Quartet* that have previously been cited in an indented quotation (above) and are reproduced here (below) only for the sake of convenience:

I said to my soul, be still,
 and let the dark come upon you
 Which shall be the darkness of God.
 As in a theatre,
 The lights are extinguished,
 for the scene to be changed
 With a hollow rumble of wings,
 with a movement of darkness on darkness,
 And we know that the hills and the trees,
 the distant panorama
 And the bold imposing façade
 are all being rolled away—
 Or as, when an underground train, in the tube,
 stops too long between stations
 And the conversation rises and slowly
 fades into silence
 And you see behind every face
 the mental emptiness deepen
 Leaving only the growing terror
 of nothing to think about.
 Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious,
 but conscious of nothing [...] ³⁸⁶

Turning again to a point made previously, just as Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock hesitates and finally says no to his own proposition 'Let us go'³⁸⁷ ('No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be'),³⁸⁸ likewise Hamm, *Endgame*'s Hamlet, gestures toward but ultimately hesitates to 'go into the dark,/ The vacant [...] spaces, the vacant into the vacant', described in the second *Quartet*—for fear of the unfathomable

386. *Four Quartets*, §11: iii, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 126–127.

387. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *Prufrock and Other Observations*, *CPP*,

3.

388. *Ibid.*, 7.

depths, the deep emptiness, in which the unknown *logos* lies—the *logos alogos*. He fears that ‘movement of darkness on darkness’ when ‘the lights are extinguished,’ even though he is as blind³⁸⁹ as Tiresias in the middle of *The Waste Land* and moreover describes himself as being ‘a speck in the void, in the dark,’³⁹⁰ ‘sitting [...] like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe’³⁹¹ with ‘infinite emptiness [...] all around’ (a void or an infinite emptiness that ‘all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn’t fill’).³⁹²

It is the infinite, in the end (from the very beginning), that Hamm utterly fears: his is the horror of death’s deathlessness, of the void’s ovoid embryo qua generative *tetractys*. ‘[H]umanity might start from there all over again!’³⁹³ ‘That corpse you planted last year in your garden’ might in its decomposition, in its wasting away, ‘beg[i]n to sprout!’³⁹⁴ The horror here is the horror of what Beckett in *Proust* called ‘a constant process of decantation’:³⁹⁵ the troubling intuition that behind the ‘mask’ or ‘veil’ of individual words and things (*les mots et les choses*), ‘behind every face,’ every ‘bold imposing façade,’ the ‘atmospheric density’ or ‘impersonal field’ of ‘the void’ subsists, persists, perdures, endures, and ultimately imposes itself³⁹⁶ or seeps back³⁹⁷ in the manner of the Latin *aliquid* (the unknown ‘something or nothing’: *aliquid*; the *je-ne-sais-quoi* or ‘I know not what’ of a *nescioquid*). This ‘constant process’ or decantation, in Levinas the ceaseless flux of Heraclitus,³⁹⁸ is, like any decantation, in a constant process of ‘*hypostasis*’,³⁹⁹ perpetually producing metastases, metastabilities. The hypostasis or metastasis of the ‘impersonal “field of forces” of existing’ produces individual things, individual moments, and individuals as such. The sense of ‘the present’ (present moments, present things; individual moments, individual things) is precisely ‘the event of hy-

389. *Endgame*, 36.

390. *Ibid.*

391. *Ibid.*

392. *Ibid.*

393. *Ibid.*, 33.

394. *The Waste Land*, §1, ‘The Burial of the Dead,’ *CPP*, 39.

395. BECKETT, *Proust*, 4.

396. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 46–47.

397. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

398. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 49.

399. *Ibid.*, 51.

postasis' according to Levinas, who further defines 'the present' as a deviation or 'departure' from the pre-individual/pre-chronological 'field': a cessation or ceasura in and of the 'the infinite beginningless and endless' flux⁴⁰⁰ and concrescence or concretisation of the individual by dint of decantation, bottling and stopping up.

Unstopping, unplugging, uncorking the bottle opens the individual to an utter unravelling, lets 'what lurks behind' the stopper 'seep through,' as Beckett said in his letter to Axel Kaun⁴⁰¹ (one might recall here the various bottlings in *Endgame*: Hamm ordering Clov to keep the progenitors 'bottled'—'bottle him!'; 'have you bottled her?'; 'are they both bottled?').⁴⁰² And 'what lurks behind' the cork or cover, the surface *qua* stopper, is, as Beckett said in his letter to Mary Manning Howe, precisely 'the void.'⁴⁰³ The void is the *logos alogos* however: for the individual, 'a law of his nature'⁴⁰⁴ albeit one both unknown and unknowable because of its mutability.⁴⁰⁵ The Kafkaesque unknowability of this law (the law of the void, the *mathesis* of its 'metaphysico-mathematical zero') finds temporary resolution however through the force of individuation, its persistent hypostasis or metastasis.

The fundamental unknowability of this law finds temporary resolution through the force of individuation which, in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, is the process wherein 'Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:/ Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;/ Selves'. '[T]umbled over rim in roundy wells/ Stones'⁴⁰⁶ ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's/ Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name.'⁴⁰⁷ 'Selves' in other words are flung

400. Ibid., 52.

401. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172 and *Letters*, 518.

402. *Endgame*, 10, 24.

403. Beckett to Howe, 11-07-37, *Letters*, 521 n. 8.

404. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

405. 'If it were necessary to compare the "there is" with a great theme of classical philosophy, I would think of Heraclitus,' writes Emmanuel Levinas; specifically 'of the river in which one cannot bathe twice' or even 'once': 'where the very fixity of unity, the form of every existent, cannot be constituted; the river wherein the last element of fixity, in relation to which becoming is understood, disappears' (*Time and the Other*, 49).

406. *Calx* in Latin, *psēphoi* in Greek.

407. Gerard Manley HOPKINS, *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (ed. Robert Bridges, London: Humphrey Milford, 1918), 34.

from what Levinas above has called the ‘impersonal “field of forces” of existing’—they ‘fling’ themselves from its ‘roundy’ rim like ‘each hung bell’s/ Bow swung’ or better still like the hypotenuse of an archer’s bow tightly (palintonically) strung.⁴⁰⁸ The force of flinging, the force of the bow, is, as Heraclitus said, the force of death. *Tō toxōn onoma bios; ergon de thanatos*: ‘The name of the bow is life; its work is death.’⁴⁰⁹ Elsewhere he called this force the force that ‘draws apart’:⁴¹⁰ the *antixoun* which in *The Cosmic Fragments*⁴¹¹ Geoffrey Kirk translates by way of English words associated with the hatchet, axe, or awl: the words ‘hew’ and ‘scrape’;⁴¹² Charles Kahn translates this cleaving as ‘the counter-thrust’: a thrusting apart.⁴¹³ ‘The counter-thrust’—this cleaving, hewing, scraping or tearing, this ‘drawing apart’—is the force that draws together the object or subject as such, the individual/individuated phenomenon. ‘The counter-thrust brings together,’ wrote Heraclitus (via Kahn’s translation), hence ‘from tones at variance comes perfect attunement’ and hence ‘all things come to pass through conflict’ (*eris*: conflict, contradiction, competition).⁴¹⁴

Miroslav Marcovich stresses the underlying importance of *tension* in this conflicted, contrasting, contradictory coming-into-being or coming-to-be: ‘the constant tension between the two opposites, as well as their simultaneity [...] were for Heraclitus a specially important or typical reason for the unity or *logos*’; ‘what men do not understand is the unity (i.e., *logos*) between the two opposites’: a *palintonic* unity, the *logos palintonos*.⁴¹⁵ Of the two contested versions of Fragment 51, the one with the word *palintonos*, a ‘thoroughgoing tension,’ is preferable to the one that opts instead for *palintropos*, a ‘stretching back,’ according to Marcovich. ‘*Palintonos* is preferable to *palintropos*

408. HERACLITUS, Fragment 48 (Kahn, 65 §LXXIX).

409. Ibid.

410. HERACLITUS, Fragment 51 (trans. Miroslav MARCOVICH, *Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary*, Merida Venezuela: Los Andes University Press, 1967, 126).

411. ‘Cosmic’ being the word Pythagoras coined along with ‘chaotic’—*kosmos* and *khaos*—to define the opposite conditions, ordered and disordered, of existence.

412. Geoffrey Stephen KIRK, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 220.

413. HERACLITUS, Fragment 8 (Kahn, 63 §LXXV).

414. Ibid.

415. MARCOVICH, *Heraclitus*, 1967, 127.

because (i) “*palintonos* is a current epithet of the bow” [according to the scholar Willem Jacob Verdenius; and] *palintropos* cannot well describe a *harmonia* (i.e., a “method of joining” or “connexion”); (ii) the idea of “tension”, implied by “-*tonos*”, can also be deduced from Fragment 80⁴¹⁶ [...]; (iii) [...] It does not matter that our best source has *palintropos*, since Hippolytus is obviously depending on a Stoïc source, where *palintropos* stood;⁴¹⁷ and finally *palintonos*, literally a thoroughgoing tension, also implies a stretching back: that ‘back-stretched, *rück-ge-spannt*’ condition of the tightly-strung bow, the two ends of which ‘[bend] back toward the right line’ or the quivering hypotenuse ‘without the intervention either of the arrow or of the archer’—i.e., prior even to its use, the supposed ‘point’ of this instrument.⁴¹⁸ The ‘counter-action or tension’ of the bow-string or hypotenuse, a counter-action or tension ‘without the intervention either of the arrow or of the archer’, ‘seems to have no point—i.e., the interaction between the two opposites or arms seems to be envisaged, rather than that between the string and the [two opposites or] arms.’⁴¹⁹ The palintonic/palintropic hypotenuse is a tension *underlying* (*hypo-tonos*) and independent of the latter existents, i.e., the arrow or the archer. Moreover when envisaged as an ensemble or an assemblage, the two ends of the bow (bent back toward their unifying lineament) and this lineament-hypotenuse (the tensive line uniting them) all together form a kind of triangle with rounded edges, a kind of ovoid akin to the *tetractys* or mathetic hieroglyph: the metaphysico-mathematical *zero* envisioned by Malfatti di Montereggi. The void, in other words, seems to suggest itself or its selflessness in the structure and dynamics here articulated.

In its thoroughgoing tension, its field of forces, the structure and dynamics of this bow or zero-hieroglyph⁴²⁰ ‘finds tongue to fling out

416. ‘One must realise that war is shared, that conflict is justice, that all things are ordained and come to pass in accordance with conflict’ (HERACLITUS, Fragment 80, Kahn, 67 §LXXXII). ‘War is the father and the king of all’ (HERACLITUS, Fragment 53, Kahn, 67 §LXXXIII).

417. MARCOVICH, *Heraclitus*, 125.

418. *Ibid.*, 127–128.

419. *Ibid.*, 128.

420. The void or ‘impersonal “field of forces” of existing’.

broad its name'⁴²¹ or fire from its yawning cannon-mouth'⁴²²—in a 'counter-thrust' of sorts to *Molloy's* 'sucking stones'⁴²³ and precisely in the manner 'Mouth' in *Not I* staunchly resists ('what? .. who? .. no!')⁴²⁴—specific *calx*, particular *calculative combinations*, individual and particularly personalised 'resolution[s]' of its latent contradictions. These are 'partial and relative resolution[s]' manifested in a system that contains latent potentials and harbours a certain incompatibility with itself, an incompatibility due at once to forces in tension as well as to the impossibility of interaction between terms of extremely disparate dimensions', as the theorist Gilbert Simondon suggests in his essay on 'The Genesis of the Individual'.⁴²⁵ The 'extremely disparate dimensions' held in the palintonic state of tension that is the individual resolution (the resolution of the individual) are as Andrew Gibson states in his recent study of *Beckett and Badiou* 'the void' and its 'penumbra, which Beckett calls "the dim"'.⁴²⁶ 'The dim' is the 'partial and relative resolution' of the void: a certain aspect, actualised, of its virtual lineaments, its latent potentials. The relation between 'the dim' and 'the void' is an 'impossible' one: 'impossibility' here expressing 'the impossibility of [their] interaction' and thus their scissiparity. 'This duality is exposed to a familiar [Beckettian] irony: the void cannot be thought, said, or named without ceasing to be the void'⁴²⁷ and 'the dim' is the name of the void, the name that casts the void in shadow. With respect to the 'missaid' dim ('the dim' *mal dit*),⁴²⁸

421. HOPKINS, *Poems*, 34.

422. Georges BATAILLE, 'Mouth', in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939* (ed. Alan Stoekl, trans. Alan Stoekl, Carl Lovitt, Donald Leslie, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 59.

423. BECKETT, *Molloy*, in *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 72.

424. *Not I*, BECKETT, *Collected Shorter Plays*, 219.

425. *Individuation*, 25, translated by Mark Cohen and Sanford Kwinter in 'The Genesis of the Individual' (*Incorporations*, eds. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, New York: Zone Books, 1992), 300.

426. Andrew GIBSON, *Beckett and Badiou: The Pathos of Intermittency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 220.

427. *Ibid.*, 220.

428. Echoing Beckett's 1980–1981 *Mal vu mal dit* (*Ill Seen Ill Said*); see BADIOU, 'On Beckett', 8 and *op. cit.*, 127.

'the void' is the non-word, unword, or unspoken 'word within a word, unable to speak a word,/ Swaddled with darkness.'⁴²⁹

THE VENT OF BEING—HIEROGLYPHIC HERNIATIONS

An individual subject or 'presented object is the site [of "being"]', and this 'being' is itself 'a multiple on the edge of the void' according to Badiou.⁴³⁰ The assemblage or configuration that constitutes a being assembled or configured on the border of oblivion is a calculable position or deposition, a positing or a depositing, on the edge of the incalculable; it is a nameable something that is almost—very nearly—an utterly unnameable/incalculable nothing. Indeed the name ascribed to it and/or its calculated multiplicity (its name and/or its number) is the only thing that keeps it from 'sink[ing] back unnoticed' into nothingness.⁴³¹ The nameable and calculable figure is, as a nameable and calculable something, the *event*, or better yet the *vent* of being: through this figure, the figure of the void, the otherwise indiscernible is ill-seen and ill-said; the figure or figuration here is the mouth, the lip of the void, from which the void is voiced, from which its 'murmur of silence' as Levinas has said⁴³² *seeps*⁴³³ and/or *sounds-through, per-sonare*.

'There is' on the edge of the void, on the brink of being, 'a noise': the murmur of silence; 'this noise', explains Badiou, 'is out-of-place, [...] in-visible, ill-seen' (by which I believe he means ill-heard and ill-said).⁴³⁴ The name or number works to word the ill-heard, allowing it to be ill-said and/or ill-seen. Figuration is, in other words, the hatch from which existence is hatched, from which existence hatches an existent. Badiou explains the situation as follows: The murmur of silence presents a problem. 'The entire problem is to invent a name for it.'⁴³⁵ A name must be forced upon it. Otherwise it would 'sink back

429. 'Gerontion', *CPP*, 21.

430. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 203.

431. See Andrew GIBSON's afterword, 'Badiou, Beckett, and Contemporary Criticism', in BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 129.

432. LEVINAS, *Time and the Other*, 46–47.

433. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172 and LETTERS, 518.

434. BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 22.

435. *Ibid.* In *Being and Event*, Badiou explains that the 'entire problem [of naming

unnoticed' into the void.⁴³⁶ 'The essence [of the problem] consists—within the field [...] whose presented object is the site (a multiple on the edge of the void) and which concerns the “there is” of the event—in naming this “there is” and in unfolding the consequences of this nomination in the space of the situation to which the site belongs’.⁴³⁷

'The striking paradox of our undertaking' if our undertaking acknowledges the partiality, the inadequacy, of whatever presents itself, of whatever can be named, 'is that [ultimately] we are trying to name the very thing' or nothing⁴³⁸ 'which is impossible to discern'; 'ultimately we are searching for a language for the unnameable'⁴³⁹ and are as such doomed to failure, doomed 'to fail as no other dare fail',⁴⁴⁰ doomed to the *échec perpétuel* of an 'old endgame lost of old' in which one will never 'have done with losing'.⁴⁴¹ But it is exactly in this manner that one who would come to terms with the unnameable totality of being, rather than merely its nameable facets/façades, proceeds: in the manner of an earnest but ultimately doomed chess-player—doomed because, in the chess-game of life, we are, each and every player, ultimately destined to die, doomed to our own check-mate.⁴⁴² The process here is a process of proceeding 'by aporia pure and simple',⁴⁴³ of moving pieces across the board with an end-configuration

the event] lies in thinking its belonging to the event itself' (*Being and Event*, 193); in the language of Gilles Deleuze, the problem lies in the *hæcceity* of the name. 'It should not be thought that a *hæcceity* consists simply of a decor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a *hæcceity*; [...] it is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child, that cease to be *subjects* and become *events*, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life' (*Plateaus*, 262).

436. See Andrew GIBSON's afterword, in BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 129.

437. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 203.

438. 'From the standpoint of immanence to the situation', the *degree-zero* of the multiple (which Badiou calls 'the pure multiple' and which is articulated as the tetractys of 'the metaphysico-mathematical zero' in the work of Malfatti di Montereaggio) is 'absolutely unrepresentable according to the count', and hence (strictly speaking) '*nothing*'. But as Levinas has argued, 'being-nothing is as distinct from non-being as the "there is" is distinct from being'. See *Being and Event*, 53.

439. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 376.

440. 'Three Dialogues', *Disjecta*, 145.

441. *Endgame*, 82.

442. The *aiōn* is ultimately the only chess-master.

443. *The Unnamable*, 291.

(a final ambit) in mind, all the while understanding that one is simply mismatched and outmatched from the outset, that the game is a game we are destined to lose. In the process, however, 'hieroglyphics [...] [of] inspired perception'⁴⁴⁴ are traced: i.e., the 'hieroglyphics' of different chess-games—each game a different name or signature, each signature (each name) a different game or gamut (in sum, a different ambit). The inspired-but-doomed chess-player who bears witness to these hieroglyphics 'sees his regretted failure[s] [...] as a series of inspired omissions',⁴⁴⁵ and thereby dimly perceives the unnameable void of being.⁴⁴⁶ Each and every *échec* in this *jeu d'échecs* is 'a wholly new [...] failure' and 'a wholly new [...] venture'⁴⁴⁷—each venture/ Is a new beginning, a [new] raid on the inarticulate'⁴⁴⁸ via 'hieroglyphics' or 'herniations' of the unnameable.

The temptation might be, as is the case with Beckett's and Eliot's respective anti-Hamlet-figures (the Hamm of *Endgame* and Prufrock of 'The Love Song'), to play the game badly, to play in bad faith, to say 'Me to play'⁴⁴⁹ and 'Let us go now'⁴⁵⁰ then 'hesitate'⁴⁵¹ and opt instead, like Melville's Bartleby,⁴⁵² *not to*. To the question 'do I dare' (Prufrock's question in his 'Love Song')⁴⁵³ Prufrock and Hamm respectively echo Bartleby's 'I would prefer not to': 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be' states Prufrock;⁴⁵⁴ 'I hesitate', states Hamm from the very outset; 'I hesitate [...] to end';⁴⁵⁵ and in the end, like Prufrock,

444. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

445. *Ibid.*

446. Beckett to Howe, 11-07-37, *Letters*, 521 n. 8.

447. *Four Quartets*, §11: v, 'East Coker', *CPP*, 128.

448. *Ibid.*

449. *Endgame*, 82.

450. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *Prufrock and Other Observations*, *CPP*, 3.

451. *Op. cit.*, 3, 69, 70, 84, 87, 88, 89.

452. For more on this, see Gilles DELEUZE on 'Bartleby, or The Formula' in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco, London: Verso Books, 1998), 68–90. Deleuze calls Bartleby's 'I would prefer not to'—that oft-repeated line in Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*—'Bartleby's Beckettian formula' (see his essay on 'The Exhausted' in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco, London: Verso Books, 1998, 154).

453. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *CPP* 7.

454. *Ibid.*, 7.

455. *Endgame*, 3.

he remains there staunchly like his 'Old stancher'.⁴⁵⁶ Hamm's 'Me to play' like Prufrock's 'Let us go now' is a move, a play, that is not made in earnest; Hamm and Prufrock have no intention to play the game in earnest or go down those avenues and alleyways 'that follow like a tedious argument/ Of insidious intent/ To lead you to an overwhelming question';⁴⁵⁷ and because they have no such intention their condition is one devoid of in-*tension*, of the tension and the turmoil that, as Clov says at the start of *Endgame*, 'suddenly [amounts to] [...] a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap'⁴⁵⁸ —the heap, as Hamm says a little further on, that 'mount[s] up to a life'.⁴⁵⁹ The pressure of this entire pyre and its very expiration, the tension of the taught bow Heraclitus likens both to life and death (*bios* with a stress on the first syllable, 'life'; and *bios* with a stress on the last syllable, the bow as bringer of 'death'), can neither build up nor in consequence collapse for Prufrock and for Hamm.

The temptation not to play in earnest is the temptation at the heart of Eliot's dramatic *Murder in the Cathedral*: the play that spawned his final *Four Quartets*.⁴⁶⁰ The protagonist of that play, Thomas à Becket, resists that temptation—as does the protagonist of *The Unnamable* (the latter published in 1953, the former performed in 1935). The game is to be played in earnest, the wager wagered in good faith. Fidelity and faith, indeed, are very important principles in Badiou's mathetic methodology, just as they were in the case of Pythagorean philosophy (where the philosopher proceeded in a manner faithful to and in accordance with the be-all and end-all of their holy *tetractys*)⁴⁶¹ and in the case of Heraclitean 'attunement' with the underlying *logos*.⁴⁶²

456. 'Old stancher!' he exclaims in the play's last line, 'You [...] remain' (ibid., 84).

457. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *CPP*, 3.

458. Op. cit., 1.

459. Op. cit., 70.

460. 'There were lines and fragments that were discarded in the course of the production of *Murder in the Cathedral*.—"Can't get them over on the stage", said the producer, and I humbly bowed to his judgment. However, these fragments stayed in my mind, and gradually I saw a poem shaping itself round them: in the end it came out as *Burnt Norton*', the first of the *Four Quartets*, explained Eliot to *New York Times* book-reviewer John Lehmann (*New York Times Book Review*, November 9, 1953).

461. See Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. Edwin Minar, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 72.

462. See HERACLITUS, Fragments 8, 51, 54, and so forth (Kahn, 39ff §LXXV, LXX-VIII, LXXX, etc.).

The game must be played in good faith, entirely in accordance with its ambit, with the vision of its ultimate arrangement. The game-player, in other words, must wager *the works—everything*, the *gamut*—on the game-play; indeed the game as such, as a risky endeavour, a veritable ‘negotiation of [the danger zone],’⁴⁶³ relies upon this wager. The alternative to this complete child-like investment in the game,⁴⁶⁴ is, as Heraclitus says, simply *kakotechniēn*: ‘manipulation’ and ‘bad sport’: ‘artful knavery’ according to translator Charles Kahn.⁴⁶⁵ One must be like ‘a child at play,’⁴⁶⁶ utterly immersed in, and wagering everything on, the proceedings; the veritable ‘kingship’—the ‘kingship’ at the heart of the game⁴⁶⁷—is the ‘kingship’ of this ‘child’ (*païdos e basilēiē*).⁴⁶⁸

‘The advent of the invisible in the visible depends on an act of intervention, an oblique wager,’ explains François Wahl in his preface to Badiou’s *Conditions*.⁴⁶⁹ This wager, again, is a wager on what will be or will have been a certain nameable, final, ‘definitive’ configuration. And although this nameable configuration would only, in the end, have been the supplement of a fundamental nothingness or void, it ‘is’/‘was’/‘will-have-been’ a telling supplement nonetheless: a supplement in which the latter’s outline (its border, its edge, its lip, its threshold) is dimly traced. The *game*, the *play*, the *process*, the *procedure*, which Beckett-scholars Knowlson and Pilling liken to an archaeology and Beckett himself to an onto-speleology,⁴⁷⁰ is thus a matter both of supplementation and of subtraction, of a gamble on the gambit of that so-called ‘supplement of nothingness’: ‘the supplement of a fundamental nothingness or void.’ It ‘involves a wager on the supplement’⁴⁷¹ and yet the ultimate *subtraction* of this supplement, its *voiding* and *disappearance*, its turn again and/or return to nothingness, in

463. *Quad*, CSP, 293.

464. HERACLITUS, Fragment 52 (Kahn, 71 §XCIV).

465. HERACLITUS, Fragment 129 (Kahn, 39 §XXV).

466. HERACLITUS, Fragment 52 (Kahn, 71 §XCIV).

467. (The chess-game’s *shah-mat*)

468. *Ibid.*

469. François WAHL, ‘The Subtractive,’ ‘Preface’ to Alain Badiou, *Conditions* (trans. Steven Corcoran, London: Continuum Books, 2008), xiii–xiv.

470. KNOWLSON & PILLING, *Frescoes of the Skull*, xiii.

471. BADIOU, *Conditions*, 123.

the closing endgame. Hence, as Badiou says, it is '[a] wager placed on what has being only in its disappearing'.⁴⁷²

Although it is a mistake, a missaying, a fated misprision, the game's gambit—its complete calculative circuit—is nonetheless played out in full;⁴⁷³ the player pushes himself, forces himself, to play the game with all his ability, with everything he has, in the manner of the *Mahabharata*'s king Yudhishtira⁴⁷⁴ or of the signatory according to Derrida.⁴⁷⁵ The key here is self-assignation, i.e., being a signatory, yet signatory self-assignation with a sense and a respect for slippage, for that which slides, slips, seeps or (with respect to the 'cartridge' or 'casing' of the signatory 'cartouche'⁴⁷⁶) is 'shot' from self-identity and ultimately makes a mess of it,⁴⁷⁷ denying⁴⁷⁸ its very neatness.⁴⁷⁹ The danger is in the neatness of identifications' as Beckett said in his first publication.⁴⁸⁰ One plays the game whole-heartedly, with everything one has, wagering all on the play—and yet in the whole proceedings, in its calculation and orchestration one never-the-less is not naïve:

472. Ibid., 123.

473. 'Fully' and furthermore 'faithfully', with 'fidelity'.

474. In Book Two, *Sabha Parva*, §55–80, of the epic *Mahabharata* (the epic from which the *Bhagavad Gita* is drawn, of which Eliot drew so much inspiration), king Yudhishtira loses all that he has, including himself, in a game of dice.

475. Jacques DERRIDA, 'Signature, Event, Context', in *Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 328, and *Glas* (trans. John Leavey and Richard Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 5, 19, 171.

476. See DERRIDA, 'Cartouches', in *The Truth in Painting* (trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), and Gregory ULMER, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 19–20.

477. The 'inherently untidy experience' outlined in 'What's the Matter with Materialism: Walter Benjamin and the New Janitocracy' (Dan MELLAMPY and Nandita Biswas MELLAMPY, *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts* 11.1, Summer 2009, 162–182) and the 'messy antics' of an earlier publication: 'In "Descent" Proposal: Pathologies of Embodiment in Nietzsche, Kafka, and Foucault' (Dan MELLAMPY and Nandita Biswas MELLAMPY, *Foucault Studies* 3, November 2005, 27–48).

478. Perhaps indeed *defiling*—i.e., 'contribut[ing] to its falling into disrepute' (Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172).

479. The 'Ø' is perhaps the most appropriate and the simplest glyph suggestng this signatory 'cartouche' (the encasement or encircling 'O') and this agonised 'slippage' (the cross-cutting diagonal 'I' that makes an 'Ø' of the 'O'). Alternatively there is the '⊠' which cross-cuts the framing quadrangle of the '□'.

480. 'Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce', *Disjecta*, 19.

although the game is played and the calculations are made with utter commitment, thoroughgoing ‘palintonic’ resolve, what resolves itself is from the outset understood to be the supplement or signature of an absence, of a void. In the words of Maurice Blanchot which Shane Weller takes up in his study of *Beckett and Nihilism*, rather than a straightforwardly ‘naïve calculation’ (the ‘*naïf calcul*’ of Blanchot’s *Faux Pas*)⁴⁸¹ the calculation in this case is only *obliquely* naïve, always undertaken with an awareness of its apagogy, of its ultimate irrationality, its actual incalculability: an awareness that underscores the ‘complicated detours’⁴⁸² and ‘traversing [...] diagonal[s]’⁴⁸³ of the whole undertaking.

The awareness that cross-cuts every calculation, ambit or gambit ‘on the diagonal’⁴⁸⁴ tends to ‘agonise’⁴⁸⁵ the player or protagonist and to ‘open affective and relational virtualities’ that might not otherwise ‘come to light’ (this in the words of the social theorist and historian of ideas Michel Foucault).⁴⁸⁶ The hieroglyphics of the chess-game form the signatory coil of that ‘nervous recoil into composure’ which Weller contrasts to the open and affective flux ‘described by Heraclitus’⁴⁸⁷—‘the flux’ that heralds the ‘disintegration of the isolated individual[s]’⁴⁸⁸ ‘porous and agonizing “I”’.⁴⁸⁹ The ‘disintegration of the isolated individual as a system or centre is punctuated by moments of ‘nervous recoil into composure’, the brief reconstitution of an iden-

481. Shane WELLER, *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism* (London: Maney Publishing, 2005), 15.

482. *Ibid.*, 104.

483. Christopher NORRIS, *Badiou’s Being and Event: A Reader’s Guide* (London: Continuum Books, 2009), 219; also see *Being and Event*, 210 re: ‘the formal procedure known as *diagonalisation*’. That which cuts across the fabric of the known, ‘[thereby] *traversing* the body of knowledge, or what passes for knowledge at some given time, would seem [in the work of Badiou] to derive partly from Cantor’s “diagonal” proof technique applied to set-theoretical conjectures’, writes Norris (219).

484. Michel FOUCAULT, ‘Politics and Ethics: An Interview’ (trans. Catherine Porter), in *The Foucault Reader* (ed. Paul Rabinow, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 376.

485. See the passage from Maurice Blanchot quoted in WELLER, *A Taste for the Negative*, 109.

486. Michel FOUCAULT, ‘Friendship as a Way of Life: An Interview’ (trans. Robert Hurley), in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault 1952–1984, Volume One* (ed. Paul Rabinow, New York: New Press, 1997), 138.

487. *Op. cit.*, 52.

488. *Op. cit.*, 52.

489. Maurice BLANCHOT, quoted in *op. cit.*, 109.

tifiable and nameable entity', writes Weller.⁴⁹⁰ That which Heraclitus likens to a game—life itself, a given *aiōn*—is from this perspective a 'general process of disintegration'⁴⁹¹ punctuated by ongoing individuations (recoils into composure). Indeed both aspects, the open and the closed, the disintegrative and the integrative, the uncoiling and the recoiling, the always-unnameable and the ever-renamed, are aspects of what Heraclitus called 'the flux':⁴⁹² 'The flux of the celebrated Fragment', Weller reminds us in his study of Samuel Beckett, 'scatters and again gathers, forms and dissolves, approaches and departs.'⁴⁹³ Heraclitus's word for this is *agchibasiēn*.

AGCHIBASIĒN (BACK AND FORTH)—COME AND GO, TO AND FRO

The *Suda*,⁴⁹⁴ *Thesaurus*,⁴⁹⁵ and *Lexicon*⁴⁹⁶ state that the Ionian or Attic *agchibasiēn* is cognate with the Doric or Dorian *amphibasis* and designates the 'to and fro' or 'come and go' of one engaged in battle. With reference to Heraclitus's infamous one-word fragment,⁴⁹⁷ the *Suda* states that 'Some say *amphibētein*, but the Ionians prefer *agchibatein* and Heraclitus *agchibasiēn*'.⁴⁹⁸ Marcovich suggests that 'If [...] the *Suda*, *Thesaurus*, and *LSJ* (wherein *agchibasiēn* = *amphibatein*) [are correct], [...] then we might perhaps think of some Heraclitean wordplay [at work in this one-word fragment]'—a wordplay wherein the 'clash' or 'collision'⁴⁹⁹ of *agchibasiēn* and *amphibatein* would be homologous with the back-and-forth 'connexions' or Heraclitean

490. Op. cit., 52.

491. In her recently-published study *Beckett and Decay* (London: Continuum Books, 2009), Kathryn WHITE is obviously in agreement.

492. 'Beckett is offering us a vision of the real akin to that of Heraclitus', argues Weller in his study (op. cit., 63).

493. Op. cit. 50.

494. *Suda* A1762 (online at www.stoa.org).

495. Henri ESTIENNE, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (Geneva: Henry Stephanus, 1572).

496. Henry George LIDDELL and Robert SCOTT, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Revised and Augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

497. HERACLITUS, fragment 122 (Kahn, 289).

498. *Suda* A1762.

499. The engaged conflict and conflicted engagement.

*syllapsis*⁵⁰⁰ of that which Heraclitus calls the *palintonos* or *palintropos harmoniē* (translated by Marcovich as a ‘back-stretched connexion’).⁵⁰¹ The ‘to and fro’ or ‘come and go’ of battle, struggle, conflict or *polemos*⁵⁰² would thus, for Heraclitus, be a movement or *choreo*⁵⁰³ that is only *apparently* divisive: a division and discordance that orchestrates a less apparent, indeed ‘hidden,’⁵⁰⁴ concordance.

What is ‘grasped’ in and as this hidden harmony or subtle *syllapsis* is ‘something which is being brought together and something which is being brought apart’, in the words of Heraclitus; ‘something which is in tune and something which is out of tune’;⁵⁰⁵ it is that ‘something or nothing’⁵⁰⁶ (*aliquid, nescioquid: je-ne-sais-quoi*) ‘which is being brought together’ in ‘being brought apart’ and which finds concordance in discordance. It might be called the ‘field’ of discord or ‘field’ of battle; and calling it a field highlights the problematic use of the

500. HERACLITUS, Fragment 10 (Kahn 85, §CXXIV).

501. HERACLITUS, Fragment 51 (Kahn 51, §LXXVIII). Marcovich disagrees, however, with the interpretation of the *Suda*, *Thesaurus*, and *Lexicon*; ‘a meaning like “clash” or “collision” [i.e., *amphibētein*] is not documented for *agchibasiēn*’, he argues; ‘so the *Suda*, *Thesaurus*, and *LSJ* (wherein *agchibasiēn* = *amphibētein*) must be mistaken’ (MARCOVICH, 566; conjugation slightly altered). With respect to this particular fragment, the present study sides with the standard lexica (the *Suda*, *Thesaurus*, and *Lexicon*) and their ‘connexion’—their interconnection—of *amphibētein*, *agchibatein*, *agchibasiēn*.

502. Re: *polemos*, see HERACLITUS, Fragments 53, 80, and 125 (Kahn, 67 §LXXXIII/§LXXXIII, 65 §LXXVII).

503. See Heraclitus, quoted by Socrates, in Plato’s *Cratylus* 402A: *Legei pou Herakleitos hoti ‘panta chorei kai ouden menei’, kai potamou rhoei apeikazon ta onta legei hos ‘dis es ton auton potamon ouk an embaies’* (‘Heraclitus is supposed to say that “all things are in motion and nothing at rest”, and he compares them [i.e., “all things”] to the stream of a river, and says that you cannot go into the same water twice’). Note here that *panta rhei*—‘everything moves’, ‘everything flows’, ‘all things are in motion’: ‘the most celebrated [...] saying of Heraclitus’, as Charles KAHN points out (168)—is in fact not *panta rhei* (‘everything flows’) but *panta chorei* (‘all things give way’), the verb *rheo* meaning ‘to flow’ and the verb *choreo*, as in choreography, meaning to ‘give way’. Richard Geldard, like Philip Wheelwright and the two German historians of the so-called *pivotal* or *axial age* before them (Erik Voegelin and Karl Jaspers), links the ‘giving way’ of Heraclitus’s *logos* and *choreo* to the *dao* and *wu wei* of his Chinese contemporary, Laozi (*dao* meaning ‘way’ and *wu wei* ‘giving way’); see GELDARD, *Remembering Heraclitus* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2000), 119–125, and WHEELWRIGHT, 3, 110.

504. HERACLITUS, Fragment 123 (Kahn, 33 §x).

505. HERACLITUS, Fragment 10 (MARCOVICH, 105).

506. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172 and *Letters*, 518.

word 'grasp' above, since one does not 'grasp' a field so much as 'cross' it. The 'grasping' is a 'crossing' here—indeed, a criss-cross back and forth: the field is 'grasped' through an exhaustive criss-cross, *agchibasiēn* or *amphisbatein* akin to that of the chess-game's to-and-fro. In the chess-game, the aforementioned criss-cross, *agchibasiēn* or *amphisbatein*, is exhausted at the point of check-mate,⁵⁰⁷ at which point no further moves are possible and in consequence the chess-pieces and chess-board are but the figure and ground, or the 'site' as such, of a void. The chess-pieces and chess-board, figure and ground, are the present[ed] objects of an essential absence—an essential absence 'whose presented object is the site: a multiple on the edge of the void', according to Badiou.⁵⁰⁸ It is at this point that 'there is' the quintessence of the chess-game: 'the "there is" of an event' as Badiou again would say⁵⁰⁹—i.e., in the words of Levinas, 'a content obtained through the negation of all content'.⁵¹⁰ 'There is nothing' at this point, 'but there is being, like a field of forces'.⁵¹¹ Like Levinas, but via Eliot and Beckett,

We want to call attention to this being a density, an atmosphere, a field, which is not to be identified with an object that would have this density, or that would be taken up in the breath of existence or situated within a field of forces. We want to call attention to the existential density of the void itself, devoid of all being, empty even of void, whatever be the power of negation applied to itself. Negation does not end up with being as a structure and organisation of objects; that which affirms and imposes itself in the extreme situation we have imagined [...] is being as an impersonal field, a field without proprietor or master, where negation, annihilation and nothingness are events like affirmation, creation and subsistence, but

507. Also stalemate, which was taken to be a kind of suicide rather than *shah mat* in classical shatrang (see Harold James Ruthven MURRAY, *A History of Chess*, London: Oxford University Press, 1913, 229, 267).

508. BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 203.

509. Ibid.

510. LEVINAS, *Existence and Existents*, 59.

511. Ibid.

impersonal events. A presence of absence, the “there is” is beyond contradiction; it embraces and dominates its contradictory.⁵¹²

This ‘presence, embryonic, undeveloped, of a self that might have been but never got born’, this ‘presence of absence’: ‘an *être manqué*’,⁵¹³ ‘embraces and dominates its contradictory’ in the manner of Heraclitus the Obscure.⁵¹⁴ In the essay that begins with a relating of Beckett to ‘Heraclitus the Obscure’, Badiou suggests that ‘being’ in the latter’s work, this ‘*être manqué*’ or ‘*être assassiné*’, is ‘anti-dialectical’: a larval ‘grey black’ being, always only dimly discerned, always on the brink of oblivion, on the edge of the void—and discerned as such, moreover, only by constantly approaching and withdrawing from it in the manner of Heraclitean *agchibasiēn*. In this crossing back-and-forth the chessboard’s black-and-white becomes a ‘blooming buzzing confusion’;⁵¹⁵ ‘the accidentless One-and-Only’⁵¹⁶ discerned by Murphy in the wake of *Murphy*’s chess-game. The binary black-and-white co-ordinates become a monochrome wasteland, conjoin ‘under the shadow of this grey’ (‘a shadow different from either/ Your shadow sprawling over the [chessboard] at daybreak, or/ Your shadow huddled by [it at dusk]’)⁵¹⁷ as a ‘grey shadow’ between the chessboard’s borders: ‘the grey shadow between [its] lips’.⁵¹⁸ As with the Greek *gnōmōn*, measurable things emerge from this shadow, within this shadow, with and in this shadow. The game is itself the movement of and in this shadow. Being takes place with and in this shadow. ‘We could call the place of being, or the set-up that bears witness to the question of being in the form of the place, a *grey black*’, Badiou therefore suggests.⁵¹⁹ ‘What is the grey black?’ he asks. ‘It is a black such that no light can be inferred to contrast with it, an ‘uncontrasted’ black. This black is sufficiently

512. Ibid.

513. HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett*, 247.

514. BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 1.

515. *Murphy*, 245.

516. Ibid., 246.

517. ELIOT, ‘The Death of Saint Narcissus’ in *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (ed. Valerie Eliot, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 91.

518. ‘The Death of Saint Narcissus’, 91.

519. BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 6.

grey for no light to be opposed to it as its Other.' Hence 'the place of being' is 'a black that is grey enough to be anti-dialectical, separated from all contradiction with light. The grey black is a black that must be grasped in its own arrangement and which does not form a pair with anything else.'⁵²⁰ The 'grey black' is, again, a unity in division, a divisive unity. It is an embryonic 'field', a 'field of individuation' as Deleuze and before him Simondon would say—a field of scissiparity and of schizogenesis.

To 'grasp' the nature of this 'field' is, according to Gilles Deleuze, to 'again become embryos': a kind of self-undoing or self-overcoming. 'The embryo is the individual directly caught up in the field of its individuation', he explains, and remaining within or returning to this condition, being caught up in one's field of individuation, is 'a movement of turning and wounding gravitation [...], a pure staging without author, without actors and without subjects'.⁵²¹ Or more precisely, 'there are indeed actors and subjects' in this staging, 'but these are larvae' rather than fully formed.⁵²² In this condition one is (again) like an egg. 'But the egg is not regressive; on the contrary, it is perfectly contemporary: you always carry it with you as your own milieu of experimentation, your associated milieu', he explains with Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The egg is the milieu of pure intensity [...]: the egg always designates this intensive reality, which [...] is not "before" the organism [but] "adjacent" to it and, what's more, is continually in the process of constructing itself. If it is tied to childhood, it [...] is not the child "before" the adult, or the mother "before" the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map. The [egg as a] body without organs is precisely this intense *germen* where there are not and cannot be either parents or children (organic representation). This is what Freud failed to understand

520. Ibid.

521. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 219.

522. Ibid.

about Weismann: the child as the germinal contemporary of its parents. Thus the [egg as a] body without organs is never yours or mine. It is always *a* body. It is no more projective than it is regressive. It is an involution, but always a contemporary, creative involution. The organs distribute themselves on the body without organs, but they distribute themselves independently of the form of the organism; forms become contingent, organs are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced—flows, thresholds, and gradients. “A” stomach, “an” eye, “a” mouth: the indefinite article does not lack anything; it is not indeterminate or undifferentiated, but expresses the pure determination of intensity, intensive difference. [...] There is a distribution of intensive principles of organs, with their positive indefinite articles, within a collectivity or multiplicity, inside an assemblage, and according to machinic connections operating on a body without organs. *Logos spermatikos* [...] a continually self-constructing milieu.⁵²³

GELASSENHEIT—LETTING BE AND LETTING GO

This condition of ‘zero-’ or ‘pure intensity’ and of ‘zero intensity as principle of production’⁵²⁴ is the condition of the seminal and generative *logos*, which Deleuze connected in his ‘Responses to a Series of Questions’⁵²⁵ to the Proustian ‘involuntary’: that which runs counter to personal wants, wills, desires. With respect to willed arrangements and willed constructions this *logos* is a veritable *anti-logos*, and yet this *anti-logos* is, as *anti-dialectical*⁵²⁶ (perhaps one should say *ante-dialectical*), as *anti-antithetical* as ‘an “uncontrasted” black’: Beckett’s

523. DELEUZE & GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 164–165.

524. *Ibid.*, 164.

525. Gilles DELEUZE and Arnaud VILLANI, ‘Responses to a Series of Questions’ (November 1981, anonymously translated in *Collapse: The Journal of Philosophical Research and Development*, volume III, 2007), 40.

526. BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 6.

'grey black'.⁵²⁷ 'For me the *anti-logos* is connected less with the tricks of the Sophists than with Proust's *involuntary*', explains Deleuze:⁵²⁸ 'the black hole of involuntary memory', as he states with Félix Guattari in the 'Year Zero' subsection of *A Thousand Plateaus*.⁵²⁹ From the black hole of involuntary memory, that which 'has been registered by our extreme inattention'⁵³⁰ 'begins to seep through'⁵³¹—indeed floods forth. 'Involuntary memory is explosive', Beckett stated in his study of Marcel Proust, and in bursting forth 'it restores not merely the past object but the Lazarus that it charmed or tortured, not merely Lazarus and the object but more': precisely 'what the mock-reality of experience never can and never will reveal—the real'.⁵³²

Just as Jacques Lacan famously said that 'mathematisation alone touches the real',⁵³³ Beckett stated in *Proust* that the hieroglyphic *mathesis* is 'the only reality'⁵³⁴ and that the reality traced by such 'hieroglyphics' ('the only reality') is 'that *gouffre interdit à nos sondes*, the gulf or abyss beyond our gist.⁵³⁵ 'But here, in that "*gouffre interdit à nos sondes*", is stored the essence of our selves, [...] of our many selves and their concretions'.⁵³⁶ Echoing section 230 of Nietzsche's 'Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future' (*Beyond Good and Evil*), he suggests that 'under the nose of our vulgarity [lies] the fine essence of a smothered divinity whose whispered "*disfazione*" is drowned in the healthy bawling of an all-embracing appetite'.⁵³⁷ Nietzsche called this whispered '*disfazione*' 'the terrible basic text of *homo natura*'.⁵³⁸ *homo natura* being his Dionysian 'smothered divinity'. 'Under flattering colours and varnish the terrible text of *homo natura* must again be discerned', insisted Nietzsche—

527. Ibid.

528. Op. cit., 40.

529. DELEUZE & GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus Plateaus*, 186.

530. BECKETT, *Proust*, 18.

531. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

532. BECKETT, *Proust*, 20.

533. Jacques LACAN, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972–1973* (trans. Bruce Fink, New York, 1999), 131.

534. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

535. Ibid., 18.

536. Ibid., 18.

537. Ibid., 19.

538. NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 162.

for to translate man back into nature, to do away with the many vain and fanciful interpretations and secondary meanings which have hitherto been scribbled and daubed over that eternal basic text *homo natura*, to confront man henceforth in the way in which, hardened by the discipline of science, man today confronts the rest of nature—with dauntless Oedipus eyes and stopped-up Odysseus ears deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird-catchers [...]—that may be a strange and extravagant task, but it is a task!⁵³⁹

This task, which Beckett would call an onto-speleology and/or an unwor[ld]ding (a *logoclassm*), is in many respects an unwilling; the overcoming of one's will. What is willed, if there will be a will (if will will be), is an overcoming of the will, a state of will-lessness as 'when we escape into the spacious annexe of mental alienation, in sleep or the rare dispensation of waking madness'.⁵⁴⁰ In this state, 'such a rare postnatal treat',⁵⁴¹ there is only what is, what was, and what will be—be this something or nothing. What is, what was, and what will be, is, was, and will be: that, in sum, is according to Nietzsche the state of *amor fati*, or for Meister Eckhart, to whom Nietzsche refers in *The Gay Science* §292, the state of radical *Gelassenheit*—the terms used respectively by Eckhart and by Nietzsche for the spirit of letting be—be this letting be a letting be of something or of nothing. If the unbreakable atom is revealed to be breakable, and to contain within itself the very void from which it was formerly distinguished, so be it; if the same be the case for human being, so be it also (so be or not be it).

Logoclassm involves a kind of *Gelassenheit*, an *amor fati*: a 'letting be' of existence, be it along with or without existents.⁵⁴² This 'let-

539. Ibid., 162.

540. BECKETT, *Proust*, 19.

541. *Murphy*, 246.

542. 'Before the first night of [playing "Mouth" in Samuel Beckett's] *Not I*, Billie Whitelaw cultivated a similar *Gelassenheit* or radical *letting-be*: 'Strapped into the chair, I said to myself: "Right, let your skin fall off, let your flesh fall off, let the muscles fall off, let the bones fall off, let everything fall off"'. (WHITELAW, *Billie Whitelaw*, 127); 'I knew from the experience of *Play* that [...] something organic would happen: I would just stand back; let go, let be, and 'the engine'—'the machine', the machinery of the play—'would take over and drive itself' (78).

ting be' is the discipline of which Nietzsche writes when he writes of philosophers—lovers of wisdom—'hardened by the discipline of science'.⁵⁴³ Mathematical science has something of the inhuman, or at the very least impersonal, about it: a hardness, a 'dauntless'[ness] as Nietzsche says. 'With dauntless Œdipus eyes and stopped-up Odysseus ears deaf to the siren songs of old meta-physical bird-catchers' the logoclastic onto-speleologist would venture into 'that *gouffre interdit à nos sondes*',⁵⁴⁴ the field or arena of 'our extreme inattention',⁵⁴⁵ and from its 'series of inspired omissions',⁵⁴⁶ forlorn and forgotten,⁵⁴⁷ would trace the larval lineaments 'of a smothered divinity':⁵⁴⁸ an *être assassiné*,⁵⁴⁹ an *être manqué*.⁵⁵⁰ Its hieroglyph, its signature,—the *signatura rerum* of the Nietzschean *homo natura*—is 'traced by inspired perception':⁵⁵¹ a perception which 'sees [the] failure to observe artistically'⁵⁵² as boring one hole after another into 'the many vain and fanciful interpretations and secondary meanings which have hitherto been scribbled and daubed over that eternal basic text *homo natura*' and thereby uncovering the latter, letting the latter 'seep through'.⁵⁵³

Nothing is more feared by artists, poets and writers than that eye which sees through their petty deceit, which afterward perceives how often they have stood at the crossroads where the way leads either to an innocent pleasure in themselves or to the production of effects; [...] which sees through all the deception of their art the idea as it

543. Here in many ways Nietzsche echoes the Paracelsian philosopher-physician Gerhard Dorn, the latter having written that philosophers should transform themselves into living philosophical stones: '*Transmutemini in vivos lapides philosophicos!*': Transform yourselves into living philosophical stones, wrote Dorn (Gerhard Dorn, quoted in Carl JUNG, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 187.

544. BECKETT, *Proust*, 18.

545. *Ibid.*

546. *Ibid.*, 64.

547. Its 'series of inspired omissions', its 'waste[s]', its 'wasteland'.

548. *Ibid.*, 19.

549. JULIET, *Rencontre*, 14.

550. BECKETT, *Proust*, 247.

551. *Ibid.*, 64.

552. *Ibid.*

553. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

was when it first stood before them [...]—oh this eye, [...] which knows your blushes as well as it knows the art with which you conceal this blush and reinterpret it to yourselves!⁵⁵⁴ [...] Open your theatre-eye, the great third eye which looks out into the world through the other two!⁵⁵⁵

What Beckett called the ‘failure to observe artistically’⁵⁵⁶ is in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche the epitome of the discerning eye: the eye which sees through *kakotechniēn* (Heraclitus’s word for the artist’s deception)⁵⁵⁷ and perceives that ‘Just as actors are counseled not to let shame appear on their faces, and so put on a mask, likewise now that I am about to mount the stage of the world, where I have so far been a spectator, I come forward masked’.⁵⁵⁸ Such discernment requires a rather rigorous and difficult discipline: ‘it is not altogether easy, I know’, Nietzsche admits to his reader,⁵⁵⁹ to be so perceptive is, as Nietzsche’s French disciples and two of Beckett’s early and enthusiastic reviewers Maurice Blanchot⁵⁶⁰ and Georges Bataille⁵⁶¹

554. NIETZSCHE, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (trans. Richard Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), §223.

555. *Ibid.*, 507.

556. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

557. HERACLITUS, Fragment 129 (Kahn, 39 §XXV).

558. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 213: ‘Ut comœdi, moniti ne in fronte appareat pudor, personam induunt, sic ego hoc mundi theatrum consensurus, in quo hactenus spectator exstiti, larvatus prodeō.’

559. NIETZSCHE, *Daybreak*, 507.

560. ‘He saw nothing, and, far from being distressed, he made this absence of vision the culmination of his sight. Useless for seeing, his eye took on extraordinary proportions, developed beyond measure, and, stretching out on the horizon, let the night penetrate its center in order to receive the day from it. And so, through this void, it was sight and the object of sight which mingled together. Not only did this eye which saw nothing apprehend something, it apprehended the cause of its vision. It saw as object that which prevented it from seeing. Its own glance entered into it as an image, just when this glance seemed the death of all image’, from Maurice BLANCHOT, *Thomas the Obscure* (trans. Robert Lamberton, Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1973, 14–15).

561. ‘When I solicit gently, in the very heart of anguish, a strange absurdity, an eye opens itself at the summit, in the middle of my skull. This eye which, to contemplate the sun, face to face with its nudity, opens up to it all its glory, does not arise from my reason: it is a cry which escapes me. For at the moment when the lightning stroke blinds me, I am the flash of a broken life, and this life—anguish and vertigo—opening

put it, to become in sum an eye—naught but an eye, or in the words of Beckett⁵⁶² pure *percipere*.⁵⁶³ It requires a kind of willed passivity or a willing of will-lessness with respect to which Nietzsche admits (taking up and continuing the previous quotation) that ‘it is not altogether easy, I know, to remain a mere spectator’ in cases of ‘comedy and tragedy’—‘but learn it!’:⁵⁶⁴ this is the *mathesis*, the learning, the lesson. Learn it, and Murphy’s check-mated vision of the void in the wake of his Endon Endgame, his chess-game at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, will unveil itself: the vision of that ‘accidentless One-and-Only, conveniently called Nothing’.⁵⁶⁵ To perceive this One-and-Only conveniently called Nothing is to discern, if only dimly, that ‘metaphysico-mathematical zero’ which is ‘the hieroglyph of the human’ in the words of the Pythagorean physician Malfatti di Montereleggio or ‘the generic’ in the words of the philosopher and Beckett-scholar Badiou.⁵⁶⁶

itself up to an infinite void, is ruptured and spends itself all at once in the void’; Georges BATAILLE, *Inner Experience* (trans. Leslie Anne Boldt, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 77.

562. *Murphy*, 246.

563. The orb of the eye and the oval of the egg are for BATAILLE telling analogues; such correlations are exhaustively explored in his *Story of the Eye* (trans. Joachim Neugroschal, with essays by Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag, New York: Penguin Books 1982).

564. NIETZSCHE, *Daybreak*, 507.

565. *Murphy*, 246.

566. ‘By generic’, he writes in the first essay of his anthology of essays *On Beckett*, ‘I understand the reduction of the complexity of experience to a few principal functions’: ‘a functional reduction’, a reduction to ‘the organizing functions’ (BADIOU, *On Beckett*, 3, 4, 31). These ‘organizing functions’ form a quad in Beckett’s work, according to Badiou: there are at base (basically, generally, generically) ‘four functions in Beckett’, he argues (31). I will list them and include for purposes of exemplification references to Eliot’s ‘Prufrock’ rather than to the cast of Beckett’s characters, which are the primary focus of this study. The four functions are those of wandering or criss-crossing (Prufrock’s ‘Let us go then’: ‘the endless crossing of a world’ according to Badiou; *l’errance*); being cornered or getting stuck (being ‘pinned and wriggling on the wall’: Prufrock ‘formulated, sprawling on a pin’—‘the fixed point of the first naming’ according to Badiou); going on nevertheless, against the odds and in the face of every obstacle (‘Oh, do not ask, What is it?/ Let us go and make our visit’—‘the imperative always to go on’ according to Badiou); and the witness’ inscription or testifying signature (‘I have heard the mermaids singing’—‘an archive’ or ‘account’ according to Badiou). In another place and another context it might be interesting to compare and contrast these four generic functions posited by Badiou with Deleuze’s ‘Four Poetic Formulas

KYBERNĒTĒS (THE CYBERNETIC CIRCUIT)—THE CIRCUITRY OF
SPOOL-LOOPS: REGULÆ AD DIRECTIONEM INGENII

Beckett and Eliot endeavour in their works to open this eye, which the present essay exemplifies by way of the check-mated king—that is, by suggesting that this eye is the eye of the *shah mat* as such: the eye at the heart of the chess-game, the eye that opens at the close of its endgame. The *shah mat* is likened herein to Beckett's 'assassinated being' and to the assassinated archbishop of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. There is 'A Game of Chess' in both *The Waste Land*, Eliot's earliest triumph, and in *Murphy*, Beckett's very first novel, and these early chess-games infuse the rest of their respective works, including their respective masterworks: *The Unnamable* in the case of Beckett and the *Four Quartets* in the case of Eliot. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, moreover, emerge out of lines that were eliminated from his *Murder in the Cathedral* (which is structured, one might argue, very much like Beckett's *Quad*) and reflect the latter in addition to *The Waste Land* and its Game of Chess. The quad of *Quartets*, each one a waste land, formulates, like *The Waste Land* as a whole, a *quincunx*, and mirrors in this way the structure of Beckett's *Quad*—as well as that of every chess-game, within the square framework of which an elimination or assassination, a crossing-out and hence a crossed fifth-point, takes place. This quincunxial fifth-point is the focal-point of Eliot's and Beckett's texts, I argue.

Chess is a game of elimination, a nihilistic undertaking, and the principles at work in Beckettian and Eliotic chess-games are particu-

that might Summarise Kant's Philosophy' (namely, Hamlet's statement that 'the time is out of joint'; Rimbaud's proclamation that 'I is an other' and that a 'systematised disorganisation of all the senses' is required of those who would 'attain the unknown'; Kafka's admission that 'it is an extremely painful thing to be ruled by laws that one does not know, for the essence of such laws necessitates the secret of their content'; Gilles DELEUZE, 'On Four Poetic Formulas that might Summarise Kant's Philosophy', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco, London: Verso Books, 1998, 27–35), but for present purposes acknowledging these four generic functions (debatable as they may be) is enough. And as contestable as Badiou's Beckettian generic functions are, the basic claim that a reduction to generic conditions is at work in Beckett's poetry, prose and plays is very much evident to those familiar with Beckett's *œuvre*, and more importantly (for the present study) is evident in every chess-game, each one of which endeavours such a generic reduction.

larly pre-Platonic: Pythagorean and Heraclitean in origin. Beckett and Eliot point us in the direction of these pre-Platonic figures⁵⁶⁷ and exemplify in their respective poetry, prose, and plays (1) the notion of *personae* as Pythagorean *psēphoi* or Heraclitean *pesseia*, (2) the impersonal/pre-personal 'field' of the Pythagorean *tetractys* or Heraclitean *logos*, and (3) the dynamics in play⁵⁶⁸ between the personal and the pre-personal, the *psēphoi* or *pesseia* and the *logos* or *tetractys*, expressed as a thoroughgoing tension: the Heraclitean *palintonos* or Pythagorean *hypotonos*. To these three sets of pre-Platonic principles—the *pesseia/psēphoi*, the *tetractys/logos* and the *hypotonos/palintonos harmoniē*—one last pre-Platonic principle, a fourth and final one, must in the end be added. This last is a lesser-known principle drawn from the better-known (perhaps best-known) pre-Platonic philosopher, the last of the pre-Platonics: Socrates.

The master principle in Socratic philosophy is one of negative capability or what Beckett would call 'inspired ignorance': 'Socrates' position gets its authority through his maintaining ignorance about everything with the exception of *erōs*,' the binding principle, explains Badiou.⁵⁶⁹ The philosopher maintains an ignorance of everything except *erōs*, *philia*, *agapē* (*amor fati*): the philosopher's 'love' of wisdom. Philosophy, the love and loving pursuit of wisdom both in its abstractions and in its concretions, necessitates, for Socrates, the mastery of not being a master or of submitting one's supposed mastery to the ultimate master: not knowing (Georges Bataille would call this 'the unfinished system of non-knowledge').⁵⁷⁰ The unknown is the steersman for Socrates, the ultimate piloting principle he calls the *kybernētēs*.⁵⁷¹ Wisdom is the wisdom of being bound to this piloting principle via *erōs*, *philia*, *agapē* or *amor fati*, of being tied to it like

567. For instance via the Pythagorean formulations in Beckett's *Murphy* and the Heraclitean epigraphs of Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

568. In the 'play'.

569. BADIOU, *Conditions*, 238.

570. Georges BATAILLE, *The Unfinished System of Non-Knowledge* (trans. Stuart and Michelle Kendall, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

571. See PLATO, *The Republic* 1:341C–D—a dialogue here between Socrates and Thrasymachus; and *The Statesman* 272D–E—a dialogue here between 'Young Socrates' and 'A Stranger', in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, including the Letters* (Hamilton and Cairns, eds. Princeton: Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 591, 1038.

Murphy 'naked in his rocking-chair of undressed teak'⁵⁷² or—slightly less literally—like Hamm to his 'armchair on castors'⁵⁷³ rocked (on the one hand) or wheeled (on the other) to and fro, back and forth, in Beckett's *Murphy* and *Endgame* respectively.

Modern 'cybernetics' and its cybernetic 'circuit' or 'feedback loop' (not to mention the spool-loops of Krapp's *Last Tape*, *La dernière bande*, the play that followed after *Endgame* in Beckett's *œuvre*⁵⁷⁴) trace their theoretical origin back to the Socratic *kybernētēs*⁵⁷⁵ which is itself a loop or circuit elliptically encircling or wrapping round an unknown, unnamed, ultimately unknowable and unnameable core, an *être manqué*. The circuits of a chess-game and the chess-game as a series of short-circuits⁵⁷⁶ reflects in turn this hieroglyphic loop, the hieroglyph of a metaphysico-mathematical zero. Following this loop, tracing this hieroglyph, is akin to following the *logos* in the philosophy of Heraclitus or hearkening to the *tetractys* in the philosophy of Pythagoras: it is an *agchibasiēn* or an *amphibētein* within the back-and-forth circuit of which the entirety of an *aion*, its pre-individual, ever-individuating field, may dimly be discerned, encompassing in its all-and-naught the *aiōn's psēphoi* or *pesseia* (its chess-pieces), *logos* or *tetractys* (its chess-board), and its *hypotonos* or *palintonos harmoniē* (its chess-moves, the various short-circuits and ultimate long-circuit).

Just as Nietzsche in his study of pre-Platonic philosophy suggested that Socrates was the third and final angle of a triangle of archetypal thinkers⁵⁷⁷—the other pre-Platonic *Übermenschen* being Her-

572. *Murphy*, 1.

573. *Endgame*, 1.

574. Krapp's *Last Tape* (*La dernière bande*), CSP, 56: 'spool ... five. [He raises his head and stares front. With relish] Spool! [Pause] Spoooo! [Happy smile. Pause. He bends over table, starts peering and poking at the boxes]'.
 575. 'We have decided to call the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal, by the name *Cybernetics*, which we form from the Greek κυβερνήτης or *steersman*. In choosing this term, we wish to recognise that the first significant paper on feedback-mechanisms is an article on governors, which was published by Clerk Maxwell in 1868, and that *governor* is derived from a Latin corruption of κυβερνήτης. We also wish to refer to the fact that the steering engines of a ship are indeed one of the earliest and best-developed forms of feedback-mechanisms'—Norbert WIENER, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1961), 11–12.

576. Ultimately one long circuit.

577. 'We must designate these three as the purest paradigms: Pythagoras, Heracli-

aclitus and Pythagoras—so is his *kybernētēs* a kind of culmination or ultimate extension of Heraclitus's back-stretched connexion, the *palintonos/palintropos* of *agchibasiēn*, and Pythagoras's *palintonic/palintropic* hypotenuse, his well-known *hypotonos*. Submitting to this Socratic circuit, the Socratic cybernetic, amounts to his *mathesis*, a *mathesis universalis*.

Descartes, of course, kept his *mathesis* hidden, relegating it to his 'Cogitationes privatae' and the unfinished *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, even though, as Deleuze reminds us in 'Mathesis, Science, and Philosophy',⁵⁷⁸ he never renounced it and indeed it can be said to have steered his work as a whole—up to and including *Les Passions de l'âme*, his attempt to reconcile objective structure and subjective operation, the 'identification of subject and object' which Beckett in *Proust* called 'the only reality' ('the hieroglyphics traced by inspired perception'—in this case inspired 'pineal' perception: perception from the perspective of the 'pineal eye').⁵⁷⁹ The *mathesis* that secretly steered, governed, or piloted his project, and which therefore constituted his *kybernētēs*, found itself explicitly taken up by Gilles Deleuze and by Gilbert Simondon during the time-period of their respective doctoral dissertations. The Simondonian *analogos*⁵⁸⁰ and the Deleuzian *antilogos*⁵⁸¹ hearken back to the physis of pre-Platonic *physiologoi* and to the Proustian involuntary, itself a submission of one's will—willing—to impersonal, subpersonal, or super-personal *physiological* forces, to an alternate piloting principle. In response to the observation that '*physis* seems to play an important role in [his] work' and that this *physis* seems to be *pre-* rather than *post-*Platonic (i.e., a *physio-logos* the '*logos*' of which is, with regard to that of Plato, an *ante-* and/or an *anti-logos*), Deleuze agreed ('you're right'), admitting in addition that 'for me the *antilogos* is connected [...] with Proust's "involuntary"'.⁵⁸²

For Beckett, Proust's involuntary is connected with the figure of Lazarus which figures furthermore in *Prufrock and Other Observa-*

tus, and Socrates', he writes (*Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 58).

578. DELEUZE in Malfatti, *Études*, x; DELEUZE in *Collapse*, 162.

579. BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

580. SIMONDON, *L'Individuation*, 437 n. 13, 562–566.

581. DELEUZE & VILLANI, 'Responses', 40.

582. Ibid.

tions, the anthology of Eliot's earlier poetry that served as a model for Beckett's own anthology, *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates*. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', Lazarus is the Tiresian figure that comes back from the dead and threatens the person of Prufrock, 'pinned and wriggling on the wall', 'fix[ed] [...] in a formulated phrase,'⁵⁸³ with 'some overwhelming question': a question which somehow 'squeezed the universe into a ball'—a question beyond the bounds of the individual and/or the personal (one that is 'not what I meant at all').⁵⁸⁴ 'Lazarus, come from the dead', and Hamlet, in touch with the dead, are forces and figures at odds with Prufrock's personal position, disposition, and desire;⁵⁸⁵ 'No! I am no Prince Hamlet', nor a Lazarus or a Tiresias, protests the perturbed Prufrock;⁵⁸⁶ 'I am no prophet', he protests, and 'hav[ing] seen the moment of my greatness flicker', he says 'in short, I was afraid.'⁵⁸⁷ As if invited, involuntarily, to 'come in under the shadow' of himself—J. Alfred Prufrock—he recoils in fear precisely from that 'something different' he finds 'under the shadow of this [...] rock' (this Prufrock).⁵⁸⁸ Just as in the first part of *The Waste Land*, under the shadow of this rock he finds rock returned to dust, and fear in grasping this handful of dust.⁵⁸⁹ The involuntary 'is explosive', writes Beckett in *Proust*;⁵⁹⁰ it blasts rock back to dust and is indeed a fearful thing. In breaking and effacing the rock-face (in this explosive onto-speleology) it also 'restores [...] the Lazarus' behind the slab or façade, behind the mortal, mortuary 'stone'.⁵⁹¹ Lazarus restored, Lazarus returned from the dead, brings a discordant dimension into the rational world, unifying the latter with what it has lost—a unification which Beckett likens to that⁵⁹² of the 'unruly magician', the magician that refuses to be ruled and ruled-out;⁵⁹³ a magician akin to 'the mad mathematician' of Beckett's *Disjecta*.⁵⁹⁴

583. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *CPP*, 5.

584. *Ibid.*, 6.

585. His personal wants, his personal will.

586. *Ibid.*, 7.

587. *Ibid.*

588. *The Waste Land*, §1, 'The Burial of the Dead', *CPP*, 38.

589. *Ibid.*

590. BECKETT, *Proust*, 20.

591. *Ibid.*

592. ('That 'magic' or 'magical unity'')

593. *Ibid.*

594. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 173.

THE ENGINE OF PRODUCTION EX NIHILO⁵⁹⁵—TECHNICITY, RELIGIOSITY, AND PRIMITIVE MAGICAL UNITY

The Simondonian *analogos*,⁵⁹⁶ Deleuzian *antilogos*,⁵⁹⁷ and Proustian ‘involuntary’, which together and separately revive the *physiological logos*,⁵⁹⁸ ‘chooses its own time and place for the performance of its miracle’;⁵⁹⁹ it obeys no will other than the *Wille zur Macht*, the force or will of *physis* (nature) in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche—hence its description by Beckett as a *miracle* or as a work of *magic*,⁶⁰⁰ as if it were invoked from out of the blue, *ex nihilo* and/or *ex natura*, and the connection noted by Marcel Mauss in his 1904 *Esquisse sur la Magie*: namely that (1) ‘certain branches of magic [...] were [considered to be] applied physics in ancient Greece’, that (2) ‘magicians were [thus] accorded the name of *physikoi*’, and that (3) ‘the word *physikos* was a synonym for magic’.⁶⁰¹

Etymologically, the magical domain or magical dimension—from the Greek *magikos*, Persian *magus[h]* and Indo-European *mag[h]*—is that of pure ‘power’ or ‘force’, the root *mag[h]* meaning ‘to be able’ or ‘to have power’.⁶⁰² This power is, as Mauss suggests, a power *ex nihilo* (since ‘magic is the domain of pure production *ex nihilo*’)⁶⁰³ and a

595. Re: ‘the engine’ see www.etymonline.com (*ingenium*) and Descartes’s *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris: Éditions J. Vrin, 1974). Re: ‘*ex nihilo*’ see below.

596. SIMONDON, *L’Individuation*, 437 n. 13, 562–566.

597. DELEUZE & VILLANI, ‘Responses’, 40.

598. The *physio-logos* or *logos alogos* that is with respect to Plato an *ante-* and/or *anti-logos*.

599. BECKETT, *Proust*, 21. The idea that it *chooses*, that there is a *choice*, is a strange one, admittedly. Perhaps this might be read more precisely as a *casting*: it *casts* itself in its own time and place (the time and place of its *casting*, or its *throw-of-the-dice*).

600. One might here also consult Beckett’s translation of Feuilloley’s essay ‘Magic and Initiation among the Peoples of Ubanghi-Shari’, where magic is defined as ‘the art of living in intimate relation with nature’ (Bernard FEUILLOLEY, ‘Magic and Initiation among the Peoples of Ubanghi-Shari’, trans. Samuel Beckett, in *Beckett in Black and Red: The Translations for Nancy Cunard’s Negro 1934*, ed. Alan Warren Friedman, Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2000, 99).

601. Marcel MAUSS, *Esquisse d’une Théorie Générale de la Magie* (Année Sociologique VII, 1904), 145; my translation.

602. www.etymonline.com.

603. Op. cit., 143.

power *ex natura* (since 'nature' or *physis* is 'a synonym for magic').⁶⁰⁴ it is in fact something akin to a *deus ex machina*, conjoining the metaphysical and the mechanical, or in the words of Simondon 'religiosity' and 'technicity'.⁶⁰⁵ The mechanical is related—in Latin, *religare*: 'tied' or 'bound'—to the very same Indo-European etymon as the magical: the Latin *machina* ('engine', 'device', 'fabric', 'trick'), from the Greek *makhana*, *mēkhanē*, and *mēkhos* ('device', 'means', 'expedient', 'contrivance'), finds its source in the Indo-European *maghana* ('that which enables') and *mag[h]*, root of the *Macht* found in Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht*.

As is the case in Nietzsche's philosophical *physiology of culture*,⁶⁰⁶ Simondon suggests that the *élan vital* of primitive magical unity is a vital force⁶⁰⁷ the potent 'potentials' of which are manifested through its bifurcation or schizogenesis as scientific figure[s] and religious ground[s]. 'We propose', he writes in his treatise *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, that [technical] objects and [religious] subjects ('objects' and 'subjects') respectively 'result from the phase-shift of a central, original, and unique mode of being in the world: the magical mode';⁶⁰⁸ this 'primary stage in the relation to the world, the magical stage, [...] is as yet neither subjectified nor objectified,'⁶⁰⁹ 'defining a universe at once subjective and objective prior to any distinction between object and subject.'⁶¹⁰ It is as such and as yet but 'a network of privileged points-of-exchange between a *being* and a *milieu*,'⁶¹¹ Deleuze would later call it a 'distribution'⁶¹² or 'vector field

604. Op. cit.

605. See Gilbert SIMONDON, *Du Mode d'Existence des Objets Techniques* (Paris: Éditions Aubier, 1958), 154–240.

606. Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations* (trans. Richard Grey, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 120, 294.

607. In Nietzsche a vital will.

608. Gilbert SIMONDON, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (trans. Edward Ninian Mellamphy, Daniel André Mellamphy, and Nandita Biswas Mellamphy, forthcoming from Semiotexte/MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts); this particular passage can be found in Gilbert SIMONDON, *Du Mode d'Existence des Objets Techniques* (Paris: Éditions Aubier, 1958), 159.

609. SIMONDON, *Mode d'Existence*, 164.

610. Ibid., 163.

611. Ibid., 164.

612. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 177.

of singular points.’⁶¹³ These points-of-exchange are allagmatic: they are vents or conduits⁶¹⁴ that channel and foreground the forces inherent in the ground that sustains them and hence ‘are not separate realities’—at least, not at this primitive ‘magical’ stage.⁶¹⁵ The magical ‘figure and ground’ is or are not yet the technical and/or religious figure and ground but instead their ‘prefiguration’: hence Mauss’s argument in the *Esquisse d’une Théorie* that ‘these actions are the prefigurations of techniques’ and that magic is therefore ‘both an *opus operatum* from the magical point of view and an *opus inoperans* from the technical point of view.’⁶¹⁶ ‘Techniques are like seeds which [grew and] bore fruit in the soil of magic’, Mauss suggests; ‘later’, of course, ‘magic was dispossessed’ altogether. ‘Techniques gradually discarded everything coloured by mysticism’, i.e., the *alogos* or the unspeakable; those that ‘still remain [...] no longer possess anything but an automatic action’ although ‘mystical virtues were once attributed to them.’⁶¹⁷ This ‘discarding’ characterised techniques including those of the medical, metallurgical and mathematical sciences,⁶¹⁸ and in his study Mauss draws attention to the fact that ‘mathematics certainly owe a lot to research into magic squares or the magical properties of numbers and figures—the treasury of ideas amassed by magic.’⁶¹⁹ Descartes himself made a similar point in his fourth *regulum* where he wrote that [...]

I am quite ready to believe that the greater minds of former ages had some knowledge [...] of which these [modern mathematical] illustrations are rather like the outer husk than the constituents [...], nature even conducting them to it. For the human mind has in it something that we may call divine, wherein are scattered the first germs of useful modes thought. Consequently it often happens that however much neglected and choked by interfer-

613. Ibid., 231.

614. ‘[D]ucts’ in some sense, keeping with the *mathesis* (Latin *e-ducere*: conducting) of Simondonian *allagmathesis*.

615. SIMONDON, *Mode d’Existence*, 164.

616. MAUSS, *Théorie Générale de la Magie*, 144; my translation.

617. Ibid., 144–145.

618. Ibid., 145.

619. Ibid., 146.

ing studies they bear fruit of their own accord. [...] At the present day [for example] there flourishes a certain kind of arithmetic called *algebra*, which designs to effect, when dealing with numbers, what the ancients achieved in the matter of figures.⁶²⁰

Descartes's suggestion in the fourth *regulum* is that the *mathesis*⁶²¹ of the ancients—'a species of mathematics very different from that which passes for mathematics in our time'⁶²² and one with respect to which Descartes was convinced that 'the greater minds of former ages had some knowledge'—allowed 'the earliest pioneers of philosophy in bygone ages' to 'recognise true notions,'⁶²³ or as Jacques Lacan would later say, to touch upon a 'real'.⁶²⁴ According to the *regulæ*, this *mathesis* was somehow suppressed,⁶²⁵ disguised and discarded, 'scattered' and 'neglected' according to the indented quotation, by 'ordinary mathematics' and the current mathematical sciences. The ancient *mathesis* was something far from 'ordinary mathematics'—indeed 'quite another science, of which [the mathematical ones] are the outer husk rather than the constituents.'⁶²⁶ 'I am convinced that it is a more powerful instrument of knowledge than any other that has been bequeathed to us by human agency, as being the source of all others', insisted Descartes.⁶²⁷ He associated its power or might—its *Macht* or *magh*—with nature rather than culture, indeed with nature as a conductor and/or conduit ('nature even conducting' the 'minds of former ages'), stressing its *allagmathesis* or allagmatic dimen-

620. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 374–375, the above translation taken from *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (trans. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), vol. 1, 10.

621. The '*matheseos*' that is his '*mathesis universalis*'—see DESCARTES, 375, 379.

622. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 375–376; *Philosophical Works*, 11–12.

623. *Ibid.*

624. Jacques LACAN, *Le Séminaire, Livre xx: Encore* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 118: 'La mathématisation seule atteint à un réel'—translated in Jacques LACAN, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge from Encore: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book xx* (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 131, as 'mathematisation alone reaches a real'.

625. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 376, *Philosophical Works*, 12.

626. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 374, *Philosophical Works*, 11.

627. *Ibid.*

sion as Simondon would say.⁶²⁸ The allagmatic nature and primordial power—or allagmatic nature *as the* primordial power—of this ancient *mathesis* makes the Cartesian *mathesis universalis*⁶²⁹ a truly *magical* force both in the Maussian ‘magical’ sense and in the sense of Simondonian and, later, Deleuzian, ‘primitive magical unity’; in fact, Simondon’s ‘universal cybernetic’, his *kybernētēs universalis*, like Descartes’s ‘universal *mathesis*’, his *mathesis universalis*, endeavours to [re]trace the split and scattered vectors of ‘that [which] we may call divine’⁶³⁰—yet-mundane, metaphysical and mechanical, in order to manage a bow-like bending or stringing of both into the spool-loops of a single and unified reality.⁶³¹

ALLAGMATHESIS: KYBERNĒTĒS UNIVERSALIS—TRANSDUCTIVE, SYLLAPTIC, OR RHIZOMATIC ‘POWER’

This bending of the bow, this unity of its opposing ends, this looping or spooling or very taught stringing, is a binding akin to the algebraic operation—algebra (*al-jabr*) literally designating a [re]union of that which is broken,⁶³² or in the words of Deleuze, ‘the powers of difference which draw together and assemble’.⁶³³ Individual ends bow down to a mightier, more powerful force: that of an allagmatic cybernetic, an *allagmathesis*, the *mathesis* of which draws its force not from the ends but from the middle, the void at the centre or ‘danger zone’.⁶³⁴ This dynamic is, in Mauss’s words, (1) ‘mobile and fluid without stirring itself’,⁶³⁵ (2) ‘impersonal and yet clothed in personal forms’,⁶³⁶ and (3) ‘continuous yet divisible. Our vague ideas of chance

628. SIMONDON, *L’Individuation*, 437–438 n. 13, 562–566.

629. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 379.

630. Ibid., 374–375, *Philosophical Works*, 10.

631. As in Lacan’s ‘Ronds de Ficelle’: his ‘Rings of String’; See LACAN, ‘Ronds de ficelle’, in *Le Séminaire, Livre XX*; ‘Rings of String’, *On Feminine Sexuality*, previously cited.

632. www.etymonline.com (*algebra*).

633. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 191.

634. *Quad*, BECKETT, *CSP*, 293.

635. Here recalling Beckett’s own ‘Stirrings Still’ (*The Guardian* 03-03-1989), 3.

636. Here recalling Descartes’s *integumentum* or ‘outer husk’ (*Œuvres*, vol. x, 374, *Philosophical Works*, 11), his *personam/larvatus* or ‘mask’ (*Œuvres*, vol. x, 213), and

and of quintessence are but pale vestiges of this far richer notion,' he suggests.⁶³⁷ 'As well as being a *force*, it is also, as we have seen, a *milieu*: a separated yet associated world.'⁶³⁸

To better explain how the world of magic superimposes itself upon [or is subsumed under] [our] world without detaching itself from it, we might say that everything happens as if it were [...] a fourth dimension. In a way, notions like *mana*⁶³⁹ express this occult existence.⁶⁴⁰

In his 1950 *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, the latter's most famous disciple, Claude Lévi-Strauss, stated that 'somewhat like algebraic symbols,' notions such as *mana*, *manitou*, *et cetera*, function as figurations of the 'indeterminate':⁶⁴¹ 'an indeterminate [...] in itself devoid of meaning.'⁶⁴² Rendered algebraically, *mana*⁶⁴³ would

Beckett's *Schleier* or *Badeanzug*: his 'Veil' or 'Victorian bathing-suit' (Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 52, 171.).

637. MAUSS, *Théorie Générale de la Magie*, 118; my translation. Deleuze echoes this claim in his doctoral dissertation where he writes that 'the word "essence" might be preserved' if we could understand 'that essence is precisely the accident, the event, the sense; not simply the contrary of what is ordinarily called the essence but the contrary of that contrary': 'a throw of the dice' (*Difference and Repetition*, 191, 198).

638. MAUSS, *Théorie Générale de la Magie*, 118; my translation.

639. 'The Melanesian *mana*, [...] [like] the Algonquin *manitou*, [...] designates more specifically any being that *does not yet have a name*, that is not as such *familiar*. [...] The corresponding notion in Mexico and Central America can be recognised under the designation of *naual* [and *nagualisam*]' (ibid, 115).

640. Ibid., 118.

641. i.e., 'that [which] *does not yet have a name*, that is not as such *familiar*' (ibid, 115), here recalling the algebraic *x* or mathematical 'unknown' which the Renaissance *cossists* and the young René Descartes opted to designate by the *z* of 'zero' (see ACZEL, *Descartes' Secret Notebook*, 121).

642. Claude LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (trans. Felicity Baker, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 55.

643. My undergraduate thesis supervisor Roger Martin Keesing, in an essay entitled 'Rethinking *Mana*', explained that *mana* is not in fact a noun at all but instead a stative verb amongst the Melanesians; a given object or subject does not therefore 'have' *mana* but rather 'is' *mana* (KEESING, *Journal of Anthropological Research* 40.1, 1984, 138). 'Where *mana* is used as a noun' (where it is used as if it were a noun) it is used 'not as a substantive but as an abstract verbal noun denoting the state or quality of a thing or of an act' (138). *Mana*, *manitou*, *magic* are in this sense (again) 'a-substantial and ir-reflexive' (BADIOU, *Being and Event*, 3) and yet each designate 'an action, a

thus have a symbolic value of zero, he suggests;⁶⁴⁴ and yet, as an algebra or as ‘somewhat’ like an algebra it binds things (*al-jabr*): it yokes and unites that which has been divided or has bifurcated.⁶⁴⁵ ‘Almost unanimously, this conception of reality is cast in the symbolism of binding,’ Aaron Cheak explains in his essay on ‘Magic through the Linguistic Lenses of Greek *Mágos*, Indo-European *Mag[h]*, Sanskrit *Māyā*, and Pharaonic Egyptian *Heka*’;⁶⁴⁶ mythologically, it finds expression in ‘*Indra’s net*, the *bound prisoner* motif in Egyptian ritual, the Greek *katadesmos*’, as well as ‘Giordano Bruno’s *vinculum*’.⁶⁴⁷ *Hiero-* and *techno-*, ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, the ‘religious’ and the ‘scientific’, conjoin in this condition, ‘as is suggested, for instance, in the root meanings of *religio* (to “tie up, fasten”) or of *yoga* (“to yoke”);⁶⁴⁸ at their ‘root’,⁶⁴⁹ religion and technology ‘tie up’ and ‘fasten’: they are technically or techno-religiously ‘yoked’ together.⁶⁵⁰ Technology on the one hand and religion on the other break this yoke—or, switching

quality, and a state’ (MAUSS, quoted in KEESING); the latter Keesing calls the action, state, and quality of *potency*—or more precisely, of *potentiation* (148). ‘Power’ should be thought in terms of the ‘potency’ of ‘potentiation’ in matters *magical*, *manitou*, and having to do with *mana* (148, 151). This is also the case in homeopathic pharmacology, where distillations are percussed (succussed) in the act of distillation-potentiation. I myself play upon the French word for power, *pouvoir*, which designates at once ‘power’ and ‘potential’ (‘potentiation’) and captures in this way the sense Keesing proposes in ‘Rethinking *Mana*’. Aaron CHEAK, in his essay on ‘Magic through the Linguistic Lenses of Greek *Mágos*, Indo-European *Mag[h]*, Sanskrit *Māyā*, and Pharaonic Egyptian *Heka*’ (*The Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* 2, 2004, 273), links this potentiation with the notion of *phenomenalisation*, arguing that ‘power’ in this case (in these cases) has to do ‘with the power of affecting and effecting *appearance*’, with the power of affecting and effecting ‘the *manifest* world itself (i.e., the world of *phenomena*)’. Simondon would call this the power of *individuation*.

644. Op. cit., 64.

645. This is (again) what DELEUZE in *Difference and Repetition* calls ‘the powers of difference which draw together and assemble’ (previously quoted; 191).

646. CHEAK, ‘Magic through the Linguistic Lenses of Greek *Mágos*, Indo-European *Mag[h]*, Sanskrit *Māyā*, and Pharaonic Egyptian *Heka*’, 276.

647. Ibid.

648. Ibid.

649. ‘The fount and root of ever-flowing nature’ as the Pythagoreans used to say. (‘Pythagoras said that [...] ‘th[is] fount and root of ever-flowing nature’ [...] [is the] originating principle’, states Hippolytus in the first volume of his ten-volume *Refutation of All Heresies, Philosophumena* 1, § 2: 555).

650. It is in the context of this primitive magical unity that ‘we can most clearly see the boundaries between religion and magic dissolve’ (CHEAK, ‘Magic’, 276).

registers and going back to 'l'ellipsoïde'/'l'œuf'/the ovoid *tetractys*⁶⁵¹ of Malfatti's *mathesis*, break the yolk of that egg described by Deleuze and Guattari as 'a fundamental convergence between science and myth, embryology and mythology, the biological egg and the psychic or cosmic egg'.⁶⁵²

The *mathesis universalis*, this mathetico-magical unity of a universal cybernetic, would endeavour in an algebraic operation of sorts to reconstitute this egg—a task doomed to failure, following the pedagogy of *la reine Pedauque*, a.k.a. *Mother Goose*, to whom the immortal words 'all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put [such an egg] together again' are ascribed.⁶⁵³ An ontospeleological logoclast or mathetical cybernetician (in sum, a cybernetician of the *logos alogos*) nonetheless endeavours to fail as no other dare fail, in the words of Samuel Beckett.⁶⁵⁴ Indeed it is in failure[s] of technique and of religion, in their respective and mutual short-circuit[s], that their mutual magical *milieu*, their 'milieu of pure intensity',⁶⁵⁵ begins to seep through.⁶⁵⁶ A cybernetician of the *logos alogos* short-circuits what Simondon calls 'the dialectical schema' of science on the one hand and of religion on the other:⁶⁵⁷ the two trajectories of the original bifurcation, the two metastases of 'a central, original, and unique mode of being'.⁶⁵⁸ Rather than *collapsing* contrasting polarities, such short-circuiting *conjoins* them in what might be called a *complosion* as opposed to an *explosion*; in this complosion, this conflictive conjunction, 'transduction' occurs—a *syllapsis* instead of a collapsing. Heraclitean syllapsis⁶⁵⁹ and Simondonian 'transduction'⁶⁶⁰ amount to the very same thing: the conduction ('transduction') or 'seep[ing] through'⁶⁶¹ of an 'indeterminate' ground—a ground that is 'in itself

651. Malfatti, *Études*, 7.

652. Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 164.

653. The lesson of Mother Goose here reflects—or rather, pre-flects—the entropic or thermodynamic 'arrow of time'.

654. 'Three Dialogues', *Disjecta*, 145.

655. Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 164.

656. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

657. Simondon, *Mode d'Existence*, 159.

658. *Ibid.*, 160.

659. Heraclitus, Fragment 10 (Kahn, 85 § CXXIV).

660. Simondon, *L'Individuation*, 32–33, 259.

661. Beckett to Kaun, 09-07-37, *Disjecta*, 172.

devoid of meaning'⁶⁶² and hence 'does not yet' and *cannot* in fact 'have a name,'⁶⁶³ a ground 'that is not as such *familiar*'⁶⁶⁴ and that remains a kind of algebraic x,⁶⁶⁵ 'an indeterminate [...] in itself devoid of meaning.'⁶⁶⁶ The x in this case (in and as this '*milieu* of pure intensity') marks the spot 'devoid of meaning' where contrasting, conflictive forces conjoin like the upper angle (pointing downward) and the lower angle (pointing upward) or the leftward angle (pointing rightward) and the rightward angle (pointing leftward) of the marker x itself,⁶⁶⁷ the *quincunx* 'wherein the beginning and the end of the *décade* conjoin'.⁶⁶⁸

This *milieu* of mutual conjunction is also a *milieu* of mutual cross-cutting and inter-perforation: as Mauss states in the conclusion to his study, '*la magie sort par mille fissures de la vie mystique où elle puise ses forces, pour se mêler à la vie laïque*' ('magic emerges through a thousand fissures from the mystical life[world] from whence it draws its forces, to mingle in everyday life': the laicised lifeworld).⁶⁶⁹ The magical *milieu* is a *milieu* punctured by a thousand fissures—the *milieu*, in sum, of fissures or fault-lines.⁶⁷⁰ These fault-lines resist synthesis: their relation is transductive, syllaptic, rhizomatic (here using analogous terms from the philosophical works of Simondon, Heraclitus, and Deleuze). Simondon explains this as follows. 'We understand by *transduction* an operation—physical, biological, mental, or social—in which an activity gradually propagates itself within a certain domain, basing its propagation on a gradual structuring of this domain [as the process unfolds]; each restructured region serves as [structural foundation or] constitutive principle for the following region, so that a modification in this way progressively extends itself

662. LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, 55.

663. MAUSS, *Théorie Générale de la Magie*, 115; my translation.

664. Ibid.

665. See ACZEL, *Descartes' Secret Notebook*, 121.

666. LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, 55.

667. Frank Livingstone HUNTLEY, 'Introduction' to *Thomas Browne, Hydriotaphia (Urn Burial) and the Garden of Cyrus* (ed. Frank Huntley, New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1966), x.

668. Malfatti, *Études*, 59.

669. MAUSS, *Théorie Générale de la Magie*, 143; my translation.

670. Heraclitus likens these to lightning's dark precursor or pathway (as do Michel Serres and Gilles Deleuze in his wake).

in synchrony with this structuring operation.⁶⁷¹ His favourite example of this is the process of crystallisation, wherein ‘each molecular layer that has previously been constituted serves as the structural basis’—in fact, the structuring basis: ‘base structurante’—‘for the layer in the process of forming itself’.⁶⁷² ‘There is *transduction* when there is activity extending from a structural and functional center [...] in diverse directions’ and in consequence when ‘multiple dimensions of being appear to manifest themselves around this centre’; indeed ‘transduction is the correlative apparition [or manifestation] of structures and of dimensions within a being in the state of pre-individual tension—that is to say in a being that is more than a [single, singular] unity, more than a [single, singular] identity, and that has not yet fallen out of step with itself’, i.e., fallen into different dimensions.⁶⁷³ Transduction is thus a convergence of divergence (and of course, *vice versa*), just as it is a consonance of dissonance (and *vice versa*).⁶⁷⁴ in sum, a Heraclitean *syllapsis*, *syllapses* being ‘wholes and not wholes, convergent [and] divergent, consonant [and] dissonant’, according to Fragment 124.⁶⁷⁵

THE SHAH MAT OR FISSURE KING—MIGHT OF THE MISSING
MAGUS (QUIDAM OF THE QU[']EST)

The pre-individual state of tension or field of forces, which is the magical ‘pre-personal’ condition, is a condition fraught with tensions, a condition fully fissured, a condition in fission. Its fissility is a matter of transduction, or if you will of individuation. Prior to individuation, even in the process of this very transduction or *déphasage* (‘dephasing’), the pre-individual field of forces is devoid of phases and phase-relations. By ‘phase’ what is meant is an equilibrium of tension[s]⁶⁷⁶—a ‘plateau’ of intensity that results in a meta-stability (me-

671. SIMONDON, *L'Individuation*, 32.

672. *Ibid.*, 33.

673. *Ibid.*

674. ‘[P]recisely a *discordant harmony*’, as Deleuze says in his doctoral dissertation (*Difference and Repetition*, 193).

675. HERACLITUS, Fragment 10 (Kahn, 85 § CXXIV).

676. SIMONDON, *Mode d'Existence*, 159.

tastasis). A 'phase' is thus a certain metastasis, a 'plateau' of meta-stability. When all the individual phases of a given system, quantum of energy or *Wille zur Macht* are 'trans-individually'⁶⁷⁷ taken together, we have a *mathesis* of the primitive unity, which Deleuze, after Artaud, calls the body-without-organs or, after Beckett, the larval subject.⁶⁷⁸ The lineaments of this *mathesis*, primitive unity, body-without-organs or larval subject—the 'complex whole that Paul Ricoeur has aptly named an "aborted *cogito*", i.e., 'the *cogito* [...] [of] a fractured *I*', i.e., the '*cogito* for a dissolved self', i.e., 'the system of a dissolved self', i.e., 'the *dissolved self*' as such, i.e., the subject of eternal recurrence—are 'the hieroglyphics' (the 'inspired perception') Beckett endeavours to trace in his works.⁶⁷⁹ 'In all of his novels' for instance, writes Deleuze, 'Beckett has traced the inventory of peculiarities pursued with fatigue and passion by larval subjects,'⁶⁸⁰ 'exhausting the possible through inclusive disjunctions.'⁶⁸¹ 'What Blanchot says about Musil is equally true of Beckett: the greatest exactitude and the most extreme dissolution; the indefinite exchange of mathematical formulations and the pursuit of the formless or the unformulated'⁶⁸² is his project, his task.

677. 'It should be noted that the individual relation can mask a transindividual relation' and that the trans-individual relation finds its veritable source in solitude: 'it is constituted by the individual that has put itself in question, not by the convergence of a series of individual relations,' writes SIMONDON in *Individuation*, 279–280. Where BADIOU refers to Saint Paul's reciprocal relation with the Christ as his example of transindividual complicity in *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (trans. Ray Brassier, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), Simondon here refers to Pascal, who similarly 'discovers transindividuality in a reciprocal relation to the Christ' (280), and (as Badiou does in *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* and Deleuze as well in his *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 36–52) to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who is also an example of 'one who has traversed solitude' and 'discovered, beyond solitude, [...] the presence of a transindividual relation' (280).

678. Deleuze's 'larval subject' first appeared in a lecture he presented in January of 1967 while working to complete his dissertation (a lecture entitled 'The Method of Dramatisation', published in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina, New York: Semiotexte, 2004, 94–116); it appears again throughout his dissertation on *Difference and Repetition*, see 78, 79, 110, 118, 119, 215, 278.

679. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 110, 196, 194, 58, 78, 254, 259, 241; BECKETT, *Proust*, 64.

680. Op. cit., 79.

681. DELEUZE, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco, London: Verso Books, 1998), 154.

682. Ibid.

This task is undertaken not only with an ‘indefinite exchange of mathematical formulations’ but with a *mathesis* akin to that which appears in the early and unpublished work of Descartes and which hearkens back, as Descartes himself suggests, to ‘Le Mot de Pythagore: *oud-eis ageōmetrētos eisitō*’ and to the Pythagorean-Hippasian *mathesis* (noting here Descartes’s pre-Platonic rather than Platonic contextualisation of this *mathesis*).⁶⁸³ What Beckett uncovers via this *mathesis* is, to quote his very first novel’s Pythagorean philosopher, the fractured lineaments of a ‘figure in the waste without form, and void’: the ‘tetrakyt!’⁶⁸⁴ Malfatti’s vision of the Pythagorean *tetractys* as an egg and this egg as ovoid hieroglyph of a *metaphysico-mathematical zero* accords with this ‘void [...] tetrakyt’ and with the argument presented in Josephine Jacobsen and William Mueller’s 1964 *Testament of Samuel Beckett* that [...]

in the Beckett universe, the Beckett protagonist [is a] unique figure of which all alter egos are the mask—a giant, amorphous, frightening creation, whose image dominates every word Beckett has written. This omnipresent figure should be referred to as Malone, Molloy, Estragon, Watt, etc., only in specific contexts. In its omnipresent whole it contains their composite entities, and it must be equally omnipresent in the reader’s mind, seen hovering vastly over the shoulders of its fragmented personalities. In the unpunctuated pages of *How It Is* it is referred to as a “*quidam*”—that ambiguous figure defined by Webster as “somebody; one unknown”. [...] To distinguish this essence from its masked manifestations, let “Q” stand for the Beckett protagonist.⁶⁸⁵

In addition to its very fitting algebraic formulation ‘let ‘Q’ stand for the Beckett protagonist’ (here we instead use an ‘x’), Jacobsen and Mueller argue that the Beckettian protagonist is, as *quidam*, ‘unknown’: a vast pre-individual field, an omnipresent yet essentially amorphous figure, an amorphous figure and pre-individual field

683. DESCARTES, *Œuvres*, vol. x, 375b.

684. *Murphy*, 5.

685. JACOBSEN & MUELLER, *Testament of Samuel Beckett*, 21.

that, like the [in]famous 'compound ghost' of Eliot's fourth and final *Quartet*, is both 'intimate and unidentifiable'.⁶⁸⁶ Identities—identifications—emerge from this field 'only in specific contexts', and these individual manifestations are fragmentations: each person, each personality, is but a fragment, a particular façade, of the larval being 'hovering vastly over the shoulders of [these] fragmented personalities', these Malones, Molloyes, Estragons, etc. This larval being is thus essentially unnameable—a fact that *The Unnamable's* Unnamable intertextually intuit, ⁶⁸⁷ as did the dying Malone before him. 'All these Murphys, Molloyes, and Malones do not fool me',⁶⁸⁸ states the former; soon 'it will be all over with the Murphys, Merciers, Molloyes, Morans, and Malones', states the latter—'unless it goes on beyond the grave':⁶⁸⁹ a possibility inherent to *The Waste Land's* 'Burial of the Dead', which culminates in the question of whether the corpse itself can bloom.⁶⁹⁰ Of course the corpse can bloom—in fact, what Deleuze after Ricœur called the 'aborted *cogito*',⁶⁹¹ his '*cogito* for a dissolved self',⁶⁹² and what Beckett before them called 'the feeling that there was within me an assassinated being, assassinated before my birth':⁶⁹³ the 'unconquerable intuition [...] of a presence, embryonic, undeveloped, of a self that might have been but never got born: an an *être manqué*',⁶⁹⁴ is precisely such a looming, blooming consciousness—that which horrified Samuel Johnson and inspired Samuel Beckett, whose aborted *Human Wishes*⁶⁹⁵ draws its title from the work which T. S. Eliot called Johnson's greatest poem (*The Vanity of Human Wishes*).⁶⁹⁶ To be conscious of this unborn yet unconquerable being, this ever-sac-

686. *Four Quartets*, §IV: ii, 'Little Gidding', *CPP*, 140.

687. The intuition crosses all of Beckett's texts from his first novel, *Murphy*, to *The Unnamable*.

688. *The Unnamable*, 303.

689. *Malone*, 236.

690. *The Waste Land*, §I, 'The Burial of the Dead', *CPP*, 39.

691. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 110.

692. *Ibid.*, 58.

693. JULIET, *Rencontre*, 14.

694. HARVEY, *Samuel Beckett, Poet and Critic*, 247.

695. *Human Wishes*, *Disjecta* 155–166. 'Beckett filled three notebooks with material for [the] play', explains Ruby Cohn on page 178 of *Disjecta*, but only the 'scenic fragment of 1937' included on pages 155–166 'was actually composed'.

696. 'Johnson as Critic and Poet', *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), 180.

rified yet always-sovereign presence which could be called the *fissure king* (after the 'thousand fissures' of Mauss' primitive magical body),⁶⁹⁷ is to cultivate the consciousness of the chess-game's central fallen figure, its figure knocked-down-to-the-ground or its figure-as-ground: the king cast aside, the '*shah* on his side'.⁶⁹⁸ The chess-game's check-mate or *shah-mat* is its key figure and the grounds of the game, hence both figure and ground and hence neither figure nor ground: the 'big blooming buzzing confusion' of the game-play as such.⁶⁹⁹ When Murphy in *Murphy* witnesses all the figures, all the forms, all the *morphē* of his chess-game dissolve into a 'big blooming buzzing confusion or ground' in the wake of the endgame with Endon, he bears witness neither to figure[s] or ground[s] but to the big blooming magical unity of which figure[s] and ground[s] are contextual cases. What is witnessed, in other words, is that 'unique figure' described in *The Testament of Samuel Beckett*: 'this unique figure of which all alter egos are the mask—a giant, amorphous', hence figureless figure 'hovering vastly over the [...] fragment[s]',⁷⁰⁰ shoring the fragments against its ruin. To be conscious of this amounts to the *mathesis* Deleuze describes as the *cogito* of a 'fractured "I"'.⁷⁰¹ The magical matrix or system of a dissolved self,⁷⁰² and 'the *dissolved self*' as such,⁷⁰³ is *felt*⁷⁰⁴ in the marvellous and monstrous moment of defeat. This is a feeling from rather than a feeling of defeat: a feeling that might also be described as 'hovering vastly over the [...] fragment[s]'⁷⁰⁵ and ruins. Eliot describes such a feeling in his essay on 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' when he writes of 'floating feelings' at odds with the 'ordinary [...] emotions' he defines as at once 'familiar' and 'structural' (for instance, sorrow or anguish in loss: emotions that can be invoked,

697. At once echoing Eliot's *Waste Land* 'Fisher King' (CPP, 51 n. 46, 54 n. 425) and presaging the fault-lines and folds of DELEUZE and GUATTARI's *Thousand Plateaus*. See MAUSS, *Théorie Générale de la Magie*, 143; my translation.

698. *Murphy*, 245.

699. *Ibid.*

700. JACOBSEN & MUELLER, *Testament of Samuel Beckett*, 21.

701. DELEUZE, *Difference and Repetition*, 169, 194.

702. *Ibid.*, 78, 254, 259.

703. *Ibid.*, 79, 91, 95, 197, 259.

704. 'the feeling' was 'there [...] within me' (JULIET, *Rencontre*, 14).

705. JACOBSEN & MUELLER, *Testament of Samuel Beckett*, 21.

provoked, and thereby 'provided by [...] drama'.⁷⁰⁶ The 'whole effect' or 'dominant tone' of a given play—in the theatre, on the chess-board—is not just a matter of the ordinary and familiar emotions and of the play's dominant 'structural emotion' (the *thrill of victory* for instance, or the *anguish of defeat*), but has to do with 'the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion by no means superficially evident, hav[e] combined with it to give us a new [feeling or] emotion'.⁷⁰⁷ This new feeling or emotion is itself a *quidam*, something unknown; the task of the artist, writes Eliot, is 'to express [these] feelings which are not in actual emotions at all',⁷⁰⁸ something Deleuze might have called a feeling for 'the virtual' rather than for 'the actual' and something Beckett has called a feeling for the 'missing' or the 'assassinated'—in the latter case a feeling for the being that has been and that remains crossed out.⁷⁰⁹

In this crossing, at this crossroads, what somehow/nohow comes across or gets conveyed (conveyed by this chiasmus) is in the end (in the endgame) the ill-seen/ill-said triangulation (triangular tetractys) of a ghostly *percept*, *concept*, and *affect*: not only the *percept*—the *perception*—of a so-called *être manqué* or *être assassiné* (the *shah mat*) nor only a *concept*—a *conception*—of the latter, but also, along with these, an altogether odd and ill-defined *affect*: ill-defined by dint of being at odds with—or 'not in'—'actual emotions at all'. This 'unconquerable intuition' (the unconquerable intuition of a sacrificed sovereign *qua* conquered crown) is again, in the end and in the endgame, the ultimate allagmatic (that-is-to-say transformative, transmutative, transposable) tuition.

706. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, 43.

707. Ibid.

708. Ibid.

709. This notion being a notion found in Bergson and in Levinas as well—see *Existence and Existents*, 59–60.